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Dedication

Tanglewood Studios-- this one is for you. Thank you so much for enduring all of our long talks about warriors, and regaining composure when you wanted to edit us out from the movies. Love you guys!

Allegiances

RiverClan

Leader: Emberstar-- a reddish-brown tom

Deputy: Minnowtail-- orange tabby she-cat

Medicine Cat: Aspencloud-- Orange and black she-cat

Warriors:

Ferntail-- Brown tom with white paws and black ears

Poppythorn -- brown and white she-cat

Apprentice, Bramblepaw

Eeljaw -- gray tom with a black muzzle

Apprentice, Troutpaw

Carppelt -- orange she-cat

Foxclaw -- dark ginger tom

Whiteear -- black tom with a white ear

Waterheart -- gray she-cat

Tanglebrook -- black and white tom

Iceleap -- white she-cat

Mossfur -- brown and white tabby she-cat

Rainleaf -- tortoishell she-cat

Cloudwhisker -- white tom

Curlfeather -- beige she-cat

Fallowspring -- orange she-cat

Queens:

Softwing -- orange and white tabby she-cat, mother of Ferntail's kits: Dawnkit(orange and white tabby she-cat) and Silverkit (silver tabby she-cat)

Apprentices:

Bramblepaw -- brown tom with green eyes with markings on his muzzle

Troutpaw -- brown tabby tom with green eyes

Elders:

Stonepad -- large light gray tom

Lakestrike -- white and gray tabby she-cat

ShadowClan

Leader: Thistlestar-- dark brown tabby tom

Deputy: Lighteye -- white she-cat and blind in one eye

Medicine Cat: Clawfang -- light brown and white tom

Warriors:

Quaildrop -- small gray tom

Thorntalon --black and brown tabby tom

Slatefern -- brown she-cat with a torn ear

Puddlestripe --murky brown tabby she-cat

Pinefur-- dark brown tabby tom

Apprentice, Grasspaw

Ryewind-- light brown and white she-cat

Scorchpelt-- orange tabby tom

Pricklemask--- light grey she-cat with spiky fur

Cinderflame-- dark orange she-cat

Owlbreeze -- brown tabby tom

Brackentail-- dark brown tom

Oatstem-- beige tabby she-cat

Nightflower-- black she-cat

Apprentice, Rubypaw

Shadowheart-- black tom

Oliveblaze-- ginger tom

Queens:

Cloudshine-- white she-cat with blue eyes, mother of Pinefur's kits: Applekit(light brown tom)

Tigerlily-- brown and orange tabby she-cat, mother of Quaildrop's kits: Swampkit(gray tabby tom) and Needlekit(brown tabby she-cat)

Apperentices:

Rubypaw --orange and white she-cat

Grasspaw -- brown she-cat

ThunderClan

Leader: Runningstar --a light brown tom

Deputy: Sootfoot- light grey tom

Medicine Cat: Whiteflower- white she-cat

Warriors:

Tigershadow- dark tabby she-cat

Sweetsky- light brown tabby she-cat

Starsong- light orange she-cat

Nettlefur- brown tom

Scarshade- black tom with a scar running from ear to nose

Apprentice, Fernpaw

Shadetail- white tom with a black tail

Badgerwasp- brown tabby tom

Beetlenose- light brown tom

Mallowface- creamy colored she-cat

Frosttuft- white she-cat with icy blue eyes

Antmoon- dark grey tom

Maggotclaw- ginger she-cat

Sandyflower- pale ginger she-cat

Wolfjump- dark grey tom

Queens:

Smallcloud- white and light brown tabby she-cat, mother of Antmoon's kits: Rockkit(grey tom), Lightningkit(brown tabby tom), and Stormkit(grey and white she-cat)

Apprentinces:

Fernpaw-- Light brown tabby she-cat

Elders:

Eagleleap- dark brown and light brown tom

WindClan

Leader: Swiftstar- small gray she-cat

Deputy: Acornwind- light brown tabby tom

Medicine Cat: Beechsong- beige tabby she-cat

Warriors:

Cedarmist- dark ginger she-cat

Dewpoppy- light gray tom

Ferretstripe- dark brown tabby tom

Flyclaw- dark gray tom

Copperpelt- ginger she-cat

Phoenixclaw- ginger tabby she-cat

Piketalon- light brown tom

Grayfur- large gray tom

Buzzardtail- brown tabby she-cat

Apprentice, Quickpaw

Cloudsong- white and beige she-cat

Fallowrun- light brown tabby she-cat

Amberspeck- pale ginger she-cat

Apprentice, Timberpaw

Doepetal- dark brown and light brown she-cat

Queens:

Ebonystripe- dark grey tabby she-cat, mother of Dewpoppy's kits: Rabbitkit(light gray tabby tom) and Heatherkit(gray she-cat)

Duskflower- black she-cat, expecting Flyclaw's kits

Marigoldheart- pale ginger she-cat, expecting Grayfur's kits

Apprentices:

Quickpaw- dark ginger tom

Timberpaw- dark brown tom

Elders:

Shrewwhisker- small brown tom

Territories

Prologue

[image]

A thin layer of mist rose from the pool, binding the cats in the depths of the cave. One stepped forward, stars twinkling in her fur and eyes. Another cat stepped beside her, his long black and white tail stretching above him. The she-cat touched the pool softly with her nose until the mist dissolved from the cave. A distorted image appeared in the pool, the image of the RiverClan nursery.

"Good," said the tom," It's finallyhappening."

"And not a moment too soon," the she-cat said, not taking her eyes off the pool. "The Dark Forest knows that there is a prophecy to stop Lighteye."

Suddenly two voices it erupted the two cats. Arguing came from outside of the cave, and the she-cat turned to the entrance.

"Will you two quiet down? There's a kitting going on right now!" Two more cats entered the cave, their heads bent bashfully.

"So it's started?" said Tawnypelt in a hushed whisper.

Her companion, a small tom with blue eyes snorted. "Of course it has! Mistystar would't be this excited if it wasn't."

"Hush, Jayfeather," said the black and white tom. "We must be ready. As soon as this is over, we will be able to give Aspencloud the prophecy."

"I don't see why I had to be the representative from ThunderClan," Jayfeather muttered. "Yellowfang could have done it just as well as me."

"Jayfeather!" The other three cats hissed.

"Watch and keep your muzzle shut," said Mistystar, staring down at the pool. The other three cats sat down beside her, all staring at the kitting in RiverClan. Inside of the RiverClan nursery, an orange she-cat with silky fur sheathed and unsheathed her claws in pain. The medicine cat, Aspencloud, bent over the she-cat, running one paw against her flank.

"It's okay," Aspencloud murmured. "You're doing fine, Softwing." Softwing suddenly let out a screech of pain as her body shuddered in her nest. A brown tom with white paws dashed into the nursery.

"I heard something!" he mewed," Are the kits here yet?"

Aspencloud glared at him. "No, you fish-brain! Can't you tell?"

The tom's eyes were suddenly filled with fear. "Is something wrong?"

Aspencloud breathed in deeply as Softwing screeched again. "The first one's a large kit. That's all." She bent over Softwing, and a moment later, as her body convulsed even harder, a bundle slid slowly into the nest. Aspencloud bent over and nipped at the sack that held the kit, and it tumbled into the reeds and grasses of the nest.

The StarClan cats looked at each other, and Mistystar started purring. "Yes!" she said. "The first kit is born!"

"That kit is going to save us?" Jayfeather scoffed.

"Jayfeather!" gasped the black and white cat. "You were weaker and smaller than this kit here, and I should know. I was there."

"Hush!" said Mistystar. "The next kit is here." Softwing grunted, but with less pain this time. A second bundle slid into the nest, and Aspencloud nipped it open. The smaller kit had silver fur, which glinted from the green-leaf light inside the nursery.

"Ferntail!" said Aspencloud, nudging the kits to Softwing's belly," You have two she-kits. I'm done here." Aspencloud turned to Ferntail. "Call me if you need anything." The tom nodded, not taking his eyes off of the two kits. The StarClan cats nodded to one

another.

"It's time," said Tawnypelt. She leaned down into the pool until her whiskers grazed the surface.

"Aspencloud," she said. The image of Aspencloud leaving the nursery faltered, and she looked around. "Aspencloud," Tawnypelt repeated. "We come with a message of StarClan. The shadows are lengthening."

"And the final storm approaches." The black and white tom said. He nudged Jayfeather next to him.

Jayfeather leaned down and spoke tonelessly." The one hope that the Clans have."

"Is the forgotten lineage of the mist," Mistystar said, her whiskers trembling. "Remember this, Aspencloud, for StarClan can see something coming to the clans, something that they may not survive."

"The Dark Forest?" whispered Aspencloud," Is that it?"

"Much more than that," said Tawnypelt. "There is so much more."

Then, a swath of dark pelts rose from behind the StarClan cats. And as the StarClan cats glittered with stars, the pelts of these cats were inky black, the color of death. With a series of ferocious hisses, the Dark Forest cats fell upon the StarClan cats, holding onto them until nothing remained.

Chapter One

[image]

Silverkit barreled head over tails into the muddy clearing. Her silver fur was soon spiky with drying dirt and water. It would still be a few moons until her long fur, like all of the other RiverClan cats, was able to repel water. She searched the clearing, looking for a large kitten, who was probably tripping over her paws. Then she saw Dawnkit, collapsed underneath the warriors' den.

"Dawnkit!" Silverkit gasped, dashing to her sister. Dawnkit blearily shook her head and stood unsteadily. Even though they were from the same litter, Silverkit's sister still stood a half mouse-length taller.

"What? What's happening?" Dawnkit said, looking around the camp. "Is it ShadowClan? ThunderClan? WindClan? Because if they are in camp, I'll shred them!" Dawnkit reared back on her hind paws and promptly fell back into the mud, so her usual orange and black fur was an icky brown.

"No, you fish-brain!" said Silverkit," If they were attacking, we would be in the nursery and the warriors would be running around like their fur was on fire." Silverkit shook her fur and bounced up and down on her toes. "But Dawnkit, guess what? Guess what?"

"What?" mewed Dawnkit, tackling Silverkit.

With one powerful push of her hind legs, Silverkit shoved Dawnkit into the mud. "We're becoming apprentices today!"

"Really?" Dawnkit gasped, play-fighting forgotten. "Are you sure? Did Softwing tell you?"

A disapproving meow came from behind the two sisters.

"Silverkit! Dawnkit! I told you to stay inside the nursery today! What will the clan think of you?"

"Did you hear, Softwing?" Dawnkit said, batting her mother's brown and orange tail. "We're going to be apprentices!"

Softwing sighed. "Well, the clan may not believe it with all of the mud. Honestly, both of you act like you're two moons old!"

Silverkit stood straight and rigid. "I'm a very well-behaved kit, Softwing!"

Softwing sniffed and picked Dawnkit up by her scruff. "Back in the nursery, Silverkit. Your apprentice ceremony starts when the dawn patrol gets back. And we need to clean off all of the mud."

"But the dawn patrol is already back!" said Silverkit, pointing her nose to the patrol gathered in the clearing. Emberstar, the reddish brown tom that led the clan stepped into the clearing.

"All cats old enough to swim in the river rapids gather in the clearing," he yowled. Softwing dropped Dawnkit in the mud again and started licking her roughly. Dawnkit pressed herself to the ground, making squeals and squeaks.

"Ha!" Silverkit said, enjoying her sister's discomfort.

"Silverkit," said her mother," Go to your father. He'll tell you what to do!"

Silverkit skipped on the muddy ground to her father, Ferntail. He looked at his kit with pride shining in his green eyes. Silverkit dashed up to him and nuzzled his cheek. Ferntail let out a purr.

"Ready?" he asked.

"I'm ready!" Silverkit said, and then looked over at Dawnkit, whose pelt was still muddy. *I'm not sure if Dawnkit is ready*, she thought.

Ferntail looked over to where Dawnkit was. "What's wrong with your sister? he asked.

"Too much mud on her pelt," purred Silverkit, then looked up in surprise as Emberstar cleared his throat.

"Cats of RiverClan, he said. "Today we gather to celebrate the making of new apprentices. Silverkit, Dawnkit, would you please gather in front of me." Emberstar waved his tail to indicate the spot.

Nervously, Silverkit stepped in front of Emberstar. Dawnkit was still not there, and being in front of the entire clan without her sister made Silverkit want to turn on her tail and run back into the nursery. Y*ou're a warrior, Silverkit*, she told herself, *you can get through this*. Emberstar looked confused.

"Dawnkit?" he asked, and looked over his clan's heads. "Softwing, it doesn't matter what her pelt looks like. It's her spirit that's becoming part of RiverClan, not her fur."

There were amused chuckles as Dawnkit dashed through the crowd. Silverkit twitched her whiskers and tried not to laugh as she stared at her sister's pelt. Now spiky with both water and drying mud, Dawnkit looked like a thistle or a pinecone. Still, the oversized kit looked squarely at Emberstar, not looking like the clumsy kit anymore, but a warrior apprentice.

I hope I look that ready, thought Silverkit, then looked back at Emberstar. He had already started the ceremony, and was looking up at the sky, where the Silverpelt had disappeared and the sun was slowly rising, approaching sun-high.

"Silverkit, from this moment on, you will be known as Silverpaw." Silverpaw shivered as she heard her new name. *I'm a warrior apprentice!* she thought, and tried not to jump into the air. Then she remembered the next part of the ceremony. *Whose is my mentor?* she wondered. *I hope it's not Tanglebrook. He's a grump.*

Emberstar continued speaking, and now beckoned the crowd of warriors. "Iceleap, you are ready to take on your first apprentice. You will be the mentor to Silverpaw. *Iceleap!* Silverpaw thought, and stepped forward eagerly. She had watched the she-cat's warrior ceremony only three moons ago, so she knew that the young warrior remembered what it was like to be an apprentice. The

white she-cat was purring softly.

"Iceleap," continued Emberstar, " you are brave and patient. I will trust you to pass these virtues onto Silverpaw and make her a warrior that RiverClan is proud of." Silverpaw felt a thrum of energy as Iceleap touched her head with her muzzle. It was almost as if the warriors of StarClan were all rushing inside her, lending her their skills.

"What are we going to learn?" asked Silverpaw. Iceleap's eyes widened in surprise and she placed her tail across Silverpaw's mouth.

"Shh," she said, and Silverpaw remembered how her sister had to still become an apprentice. Emberstar turned to Dawnkit, who stood there, looking small among the warriors that gathered around her.

"Dawnkit," he said," from this moment on you will be known as Dawnpaw. Your mentor will be Tanglebrook." *Tanglebrook?* thought Silverpaw. *Poor Dawnpaw!* And although her sister's face did not show anything, Silverpaw knew that she was unhappy.

"Tanglebrook," said Emberstar," you are a fantastic hunter. Please do your best to pass those skills to Dawnpaw, and make her a warrior who we can be proud of." Dawnpaw stepped uncertainly towards Tanglebrook, and as he stiffly touched his muzzle to her head, Silverpaw saw Dawnpaw's blue eyes. As the mentor and apprentice stepped backwards, the clan chanted," Silverpaw, Dawnpaw! Silverpaw, Dawnpaw!"

Dawnpaw stepped over to her sister and mewed into her ear, "Lucky! You got Iceleap while I'm stuck with grouchy Tanglebrook!" Tanglebrook and Iceleap appeared in front of the sisters.

"Come on, apprentices," Tanglebrook said, his black and white fur gleaming in the sunlight. "We're going fishing." The black and white tom turned around and headed to the entrance, leaving the two apprentices scrambling behind him.

"Here's your chance," Silverpaw hissed to Dawnpaw, as they ran after the mentors.

"Chance for what?" Dawnpaw asked, her big paws splattering mud all over her fur.

"To drown your mentor!"

Chapter Two

[image]

Dawnpaw padded behind her mentor as they were led away from the camp and into the heart of RiverClan territory.

"Wow," she said aloud, gazing at the thick undergrowth and trees that blocked their territory from the other clans. "This is incrediable!"

Tanglebrook looked back at Dawnpaw, his whiskers twitching. Dawnpaw looked down. She had never liked the grouchy tom, and even though he was a loyal and strong RiverClan warrior, his demeanor was impersonal and imposing. He was her last pick for mentor. Jealously, Dawnpaw looked back at Iceleap and Silverpaw, who were already chatting about what they were going to learn. At least Silverpaw isn't stuck with this mangy old tom, Dawnpaw thought. Her large orange and black paws threw up mud that quickly clung to her belly fur. Growling softly, Dawnpaw bent her head and tried to lick it off, but the bitterness of the mud and dirt was too much. Tanglebrook stopped wordlessly in front of a calm but quick-flowing river.

"Here is where we do most of our fishing," he said, as Iceleap and Silverpaw stood next to Dawnpaw. "There are two rivers that run through our territory, but this one is wider and closer to the camp."

"What about the lake?" asked Dawnpaw, staring into the river," Do we hunt there?" Tanglebrook opened his mouth to explain, then looked at Iceleap.

"Why don't you explain," he prompted her. Iceleap padded forward to stand next to Tanglebrook.

"Occasionally we hunt in the lake, but it is much harder. Because as we'll be teaching you now, you must sit on a ledge of some sort and catch the fish. In the lake, it is much harder to throw the fish onto

land, and if we scare them, they will all scatter to the middle of the lake."

Dawnpaw nodded, and then looked into the river.

She saw a flash of scales, and rushed forward, yowling," Look! A fish! I saw one!" Tanglebrook placed a paw on Dawnpaw's shoulder.

"You won't catch a fish that way!" he growled. "First rule— you must be completely quiet and still. Fish can hear the vibrations that you make."

Dawnpaw bent her head. "Sorry, Tanglebrook."

"Come on, Silverpaw, Dawnpaw," Iceleap said, siting on the river's bank. "Sit here." Silverpaw dashed to the bank and nearly jumped out of her fur when Iceleap hissed," No! Not there! If your shadow falls onto the water, then it will scare the fish." Dawnpaw cautiously approached the water and held herself so her shadow lay to the side, not in front.

"Good, Dawnpaw," said Iceleap," Now what you're going to do is flash a paw out into the water when you see a fish. Use your claws, and try to put it on land, okay?" Dawnpaw pricked her ears and held her paw over the water. She concentrated, looking keenly into the depths of the river. The blue currents drifted by, when a sparkle of silver made Dawnpaw reach into the river. She felt something in her paw, and tugged upwards. Whatever she had hooked on her paw didn't move, and Dawnpaw toppled into the river.

As Dawnpaw sank into the depths, bubbles drifting by her muzzle, she kicked out, trying to reach ground. Thrashing despretly, Dawnpaw whirled in the water. Softwing had never let them swim when they were kits, thinking that her two daughters would drown. Well now I'm going to drown! thought Dawnpaw, still twisting in the water. She felt her lungs growing smaller and smaller. StarClan help me! There was no answer from her warrior ancestors.

Then, a dark shape flashed across her vision and grabbed her scruff. Dawnpaw hoped it was Iceleap or Tanglebrook, and fell limp, knowing that if she tried to struggle it would make it harder for

them to swim.

Finally, Tanglebrook reached the shore and carried her like a kit to the waiting Iceleap and Silverpaw.

"Dawnpaw!" Silverpaw said, dashing to her sister. "Are you okay?"

"You two don't know how to swim?" growled Tanglebrook in disbelief. Silverpaw stood up and looked him in the eye.

"Softwing didn't let us. She thought we were going to drown."

"Well," Tanglebrook hissed," A fat lot of good that did. That fish-brained decision made your sister here almost drown." Iceleap stared at the bedraggled apprentice.

"I think that instead of hunting, we need to teach them to swim."

"You think?" coughed Dawnpaw.

Chapter Three

[image]

I hate dawn patrol, thought Dawnpaw, as she trudged through the dew-soaked grass. Tanglebrook, Dawnpaw, and Ferntail had just crossed the stream, and now they could see the sun slowly rising over the hills of WindClan. Ahead of her, she could see the thunderpath, and the pines of ShadowClan territory stretching behind it.

Ferntail quickened his pace, his white paws against the green grass. Tanglebrook started running as well, and Dawnpaw pricked her ears in alarm. She could see, on RiverClan territory, a patrol of ShadowClan cats. Their white and black pelts contrasted with the RiverClan environment, making them easy to spot.

"ShadowClan!" Dawnpaw spat, and the RiverClan cats galloped closer. "The fox-hearts!" The dawn patrol approached the ShadowClan cats, with their fur puffed up and ears flattened.

"What are you doing on RiverClan territory?" hissed Tanglebrook, at the lead. Ferntail stood a little behind him, shielding Dawnpaw, his kit, behind him. He let out a ferocious warning growl.

The leader of the ShadowClan patrol, a white she-cat with her left eye shredded and scratched looked at the RiverClan cats with contempt in her eyes. As she spoke, Dawnpaw resisted the urge to flee. Behind the white warrior, she could see six other battle-ready warriors, growling and loosening their muscles.

I'm going to be ripped apart! Dawnpaw screamed inside of her mind. Frantically, she tried to remember what Tanglebrook had taught her. But her mind was empty, the only thoughts saying," *Run, you fish-brained fool!*"

Unintentionally, Dawnpaw let out a small whimper.

"This may have been RiverClan territory yesterday," snarled the ShadowClan warrior," but today it will be ShadowClan's." Her lip curled as she saw Dawnpaw, eyes wide, behind Ferntail. "I'll give you one chance to surrender and go back to your camp."Tanglebrook took a step forward.

"You better believe that we won't, Lighteye," he spat. His black and white tail lashed from side to side angrily. Ferntail let out a growl.

"Very well," said Lighteye. She looked back to the other warriors. "Destroy them!" Shrieking with rage, Tanglebrook bowled Lighteye over, gripped her in his claws. Ferntail leapt into the fray, as three battle-hungry warriors surrounded her. Dawnpaw looked at the battle. She almost passed out as two warriors, a brown and black tom and a beige she-cat approached her.

"RiverClan brought a kit!" the she-cat jeered, circling Dawnpaw.

"How old are you? Three moons?" growled the tom. Dawnpaw stared at them, then remembered what she was. *You're a warrior apprentice. Fight! Fight, you fish-brained fool!*

Letting out a screech, Dawnpaw leapt at the she-cat and landed on her back. The she-cat bucked, but Dawnpaw held onto her fur, unsheathing her claws to leave deep scratches in the warrior's back.

The black and brown tom lashed out at Dawnpaw, sending her tumbling to the ground. He raised his paw and took a swipe at her face. Dawnpaw could feel his sharp claw narrowly missing her eyes.

He almost blinded me! she thought, and gritted her teeth as she rolled on the ground. Tanglebrook told her that being mad in a battle could get you killed, but sometimes being furious was the only way to win.

Yowling, Dawnpaw rose onto her hind legs and swiped at the larger cats. The she-cat struck first, knocking the apprentice over from her precious perch. Dawnpaw tumbled to the ground, and looked at the ShadowClan cats.

"Get off RiverClan territory," she said, gasping. The she-cat pinned

Dawnpaw down to the ground, revealing her spotted orange and black belly. The ShadowClan cat curled her lip.

"Lucky for you, I don't kill kits," she said. Then she took her paw and slashed it against Dawnpaw's face. Blood quickly oozed out of the wound, and Dawnpaw screeched. The metallic tang of blood filled her mouth and nose, preventing her from taking deep breaths.

A triumphant yowl burst out from in front of Dawnpaw. Her vision blurry and red, she could see the ShadowClan cats racing back to the trees, leaving two limp bodies on the grass. Dawnpaw stumbled to her feet and walked to the two bodies.

"Dad?" she said, blood dripping into her eyes," Ferntail? Tanglebrook?" First, she stumbled over a heap of black, white, and bloody fur. The mound moved, and Dawnpaw screeched in fright.

"Dawnpaw?" Tanglebrook said weakly," Ferntail and I can't get back to camp." He coughed, and soon Dawnpaw saw that there was a spot of red growing in both his neck and stomach.

"Tanglebrook..." Dawnpaw mewed, and sat down with shaky legs. She looked to Ferntail, who wasn't moving.

"Dawnpaw!" Tanglebrook growled, back to his old harsh mentor self," you MUST get back to camp. Tell them what's happened, and get Aspencloud, okay?"

"StarClan help me," Dawnpaw muttered, and ran unsteadily to camp.

The bedraggled apprentice broke into the camp in a mess of fur and blood dripping from her face.

"ShadowClan border," Dawnpaw said. "Go there."

The RiverClan warriors were speechless.

Chapter Four

[image]

Silverpaw bounced from side to side in front of the stream that surrounded Aspencloud's den. She stared up at the juniper bush, wondering when Aspencloud and Dawnpaw would come down from the branches. Her sister had been there ever since she staggered into camp with news that she, Ferntail, and Tanglebrook had been attacked on the ShadowClan border. With a sinking heart, Silverpaw looked over to the mound of brown tabby fur. Her clanmates had cleaned off all the blood, but could not hide the gaping hole in Ferntail's neck, the one that had killed him.

Those fox-hearts, thought Silverpaw. *I'll shred them*! Silverpaw looked back into the medicine den, praying for her sister to come out soon. Dawnpaw wasn't dead, and wasn't close to it, but still- Silverpaw resisted the urge to look back at her father's body again.

Suddenly, Aspencloud leaped down from the juniper bush, landing on the exposed roots below. A tentative black and orange paw came afterwards, then Dawnpaw came down as well. A yellow and green paste covered the long, deep scratch that trailed from the apprentice's right eye to the bottom of her nose. Spiderwebs were stuck on the entire thing, holding the poultice in place.

"Dawnpaw!" Silverpaw said, leaping into the stream. Her silver paws churned through the silent waters, and she clambered onto the dry roots. "You're okay!" She padded to her sister and reached up to nuzzle her face. Aspencloud whipped her tail around and pushed Silverpaw backwards.

"Be careful, Silverpaw!" she hissed. "It took a lot of time to get Dawnpaw to hold still, so when I finally put the poultice on, it's going to stay on. Don't mess it up." Aspencloud whirled around and vanished into the holly bush.

"And don't get your face wet!" the medicine cat added as an

afterthought. "That means not a lot of swimming!" The sisters walked to the edge of the holly bush roots and swam to the other side of camp. Silverpaw saw how Dawnpaw was despretly trying to obey Aspencloud's instructions, and gasped with effort to keep her entire head above water. When they got on land, Silverpaw leaned against her sister and purred.

"I'm so glad your safe," she said, leading her into the apprentice's den. The two sisters settled into their mossy nests. Silverpaw rolled onto her back and stared at the brambles that made the apprentice den. Jagged sea shells were woven in, and shiny Twoleg toys that were left behind on the beaches.

"Yeah," Dawnpaw said," At least it was only a scratch."

"That's not a scratch!" Silverpaw said, rolling to face her sister," that's a scar! You could have lost an eye!" Dawnpaw shook her head and yawned.

"Well, look at Ferntail," she said. Their eyes wandered to the clearing where his body lay.

"I hate ShadowClan," growled Silverpaw, her paws twitching angrily. It took all of her effort and control to not run to the ShadowClan camp and tear them to pieces. A voice came from outside of the den.

"Silverpaw! Hunting patrol. Now!" Iceleap called.

"Why me?" asked Silverpaw, dragging herself from the den. She looked back at her sister, who was curled up in the moss, flank rising steadily. Her orange and white fur was messy and splayed across the nest. Silverpaw padded through the entrance and saw Iceleap, Poppythorn, and Troutpaw waiting.

"Hunting patrol," Poppythorn said, her amber eyes narrowed.

"Are you sure?" said Silverpaw, whose heart suddenly started beating faster. "Do you think that ShadowClan will attack us?"

Iceleap led her apprentice to the entrance, white tail lightly resting on Silverpaw's shoulder. "If we fear ShadowClan, we are

already beaten. The Clan needs food, and will need strength in the moons to come.

Poppythorn bared her teeth. "They better not try it. Or else...well, they know what's coming." The she-cat scored her claws on the packed dirt, leaving behind a series of white marks.

Silverpaw reached down into the water and plucked a trout from it. The flying fish ungracefully landed on Troutpaw's tail, who leapt up in surprise. Silverpaw killed it with one blow from her paw.

"Scared of a trout, Troutpaw?" she said teasingly. The Troutpaw playfully swiped at her.

Poppythorn growled at the two apprentices. "Stop dithering, you two! There are fish to be caught!"

"I think you mean RiverClan fish to be killed," said a sly voice. Immediately, Poppythorn and Iceleap immediately dropped to the ground, in a defensive crouch. Troutpaw and Silverpaw looked at each other, then unsheathed their claws.

ShadowClan! thought Silverpaw. Her heart beat faster and faster as she curled her lip. The wretched creatures were on her territory, stinking and scaring her Clan's prey! Two grey cats stepped from the trees, followed by a small orange and white she-cat, probably an apprentice. *Three*? Silverpaw scoffed. It would take more than that to beat RiverClan, especially when they were near a river. A huge black she-cat stepped from behind the other cats.

"What are you doing here, on RiverClan territory?" hissed Iceleap, her white tail lashing angrily.

The orange and white apprentice looked scared. "We need RiverClan's help!"

"Sure," Poppythorn growled," Right after you attack our dawn patrol and kill one of our warriors? Nice try, foxheart!"

"It's true!" said the black she-cat. "Rubypaw's telling the truth! We need to see your leader!"

"If you need our help, then why bring such a large patrol into our territory?" Silverpaw scoffed. She tooa step forward. "We're supposed to trust you when you outnumber any patrol?" Iceleap sat up and turned.

"Silverpaw!" she hissed," These cats need our help, and you are not helping us!"

"You're right," said Rubypaw. She hung her head. "We're ShadowClan. You shouldn't trust us."

Troutpaw tipped his head and padded closer to the other cats. "RiverClan doesn't think that way! WindClan and ThunderClan may, but we don't!"

Speak for yourself, thought Silverpaw. Her sister was almost blinded by those cats. She wasn't going to forget it in a hurry.

"Well," said Rubypaw, smirking," I guess you should have thought differently!" She lunged at Troutpaw, her hind legs pummeling her stomach. He rolled with her, and the two apprentices crashed into the trees. Yowling, Poppythorn sprang at the black warrior, chomping down on his ear. Silverpaw raced into the crowd of ShadowClan warriors and slashed one of them down his flank. The small grey tom looked at her, blood welling up on his flank. Silverpaw hissed and leapt over his head, expertly landing on his back.

"You filthy liars!" Silverpaw shouted, as the warrior struggled beneath her, "You don't deserve to be called warriors! StarClan must be really disappointed in—" Her voice was muffled as the warrior rolled and flipped Silverpaw onto her back. Seizing the chance, the warrior bit her on the shoulder, rendering her helpless on the ground.

I feel like a fish, Silverpaw thought, as she struggled, pain from her shoulder moving her on. The massive weight of the warrior was lifted, and Silverpaw looked into the white face of Iceleap.

"Come on Silverpaw," her mentor said. Silverpaw stood up and looked around. Poppythorn and Troutpaw were pursuing the

ShaodwClan warriors, presumedly chasing them all the way to the border. She looked up to her mentor.

"Iceleap, what does this mean? We've been attacked twice today!"

Iceleap curled her lip as she pointed herself in the direction of the ShadowClan border. "War," was her response.

Chapter Five

[image]

Emberstar paced back and forth across the clearing, tail lashing in anger. It was almost time for the Gathering, and the Clan had gathered, waiting to see who would be going. Minnowtail looked her leader.

"Emberstar?" she said. The orange cat looked up. "Should I announce who will be going to the Gathering?" He nodded, and Minnowtail turned back to the assembled warriors. "The cats going will be Softwing, Silverpaw, Bramblepaw, Curlfeather, Eeljaw, Foxpelt, Mossfur and Rainleaf.

Silverpaw looked back to her sister, who sat next to her. She softly licked her sister's white and orange ear.

"I'll tell you all about it," she purred. "And next time, we'll go together."

"Bye," Dawnpaw said, trying to hide her jealousy. "Show those ShadowClan fox-hearts that RiverClan isn't beaten easily." Emberstar stopped his pacing and looked at his clan.

"RiverClan," he said," I do not know what Thistlestar will say, but I assure you that I will question him closely about the attacks on our patrols, and let him know that we are not afraid to fight." There was a collection of yowls and purrs of agreement from the warriors. Silverpaw hissed slowly. She would show those back-stabbing ShadowClan warriors that RiverClan was ready to fight!

"To the island!" Emberstar said, and ran out of camp. Silverpaw leapt to her feet, taking two paces for each full-grown warrior's stride.

*The island!*The island! Thought Silverpaw. She had seen it many times, but now she was actually going to cross the dead tree and go

on it! Softwing trotted alongside her kit.

"Are you okay?" she said, grief weighing on her like a stone. "Are your scratches infected? Do they hurt? Because I could ask Aspencloud-" Silverpaw flicked her tail.

"I'm fine. I did more damage to that ShadowClan warrior than he did to me. The wounds do ache, though."

Softwing nodded understandably. "It's going to take a couple of days for them to loosen up." The dead tree came into view, and Silverpaw widened her eyes. The elders had told Dawnpaw and her about how it once was a giant oak tree that fell in the midst of a storm. But through the moons, all of the bark had fallen off and the leaves and branches were swept up by the river. Now the polished white surface shone in the light of the moon and the Silverpelt, looking like StarClan was walked upon it.

Silverpaw jumped carefully on the trunk, her claws slipping a little on the slick surface. Miraculously, she made it all the way to the other side without falling and jumped down on the island. Silverpaw gasped as she looked up. So many cats were weaving in between trees, sharing tongues, and looking at each other with hostility. *Where do I go?* She wondered, circling around.

Softwing pressed her pelt against Silverpaw's again. Together they walked through a bundle of trees and out into a small clearing that was looked down upon by the Great Oak. Already Emberstar, Runningstar, and Swiftstar sat in the branches. Now they were waiting for ShadowClan's leader, Thistlestar.

"Softwing," Silverpaw said as they settled into the middle of all the cats. "What is Emberstar going to say about—" Her mew broke off as Softwing's thick tail enveloped her mouth. As she followed her mother's gaze, she saw that their neighbor, a white she-cat, was staring at them curiously through icy blue eyes. Silverpaw tasted the air and didn't recognize the clan.

"Softwing," she murmured,"I don't recognize that she-cat's scent. Is she a ThunderClan cat?"

Softwing nodded. "Be careful about what you say in a gathering, Silverpaw. You never know who may be listening, or watching to see what RiverClan does." Silverpaw nodded as a drumming of paws made everyone's head turn.

"ShadowClan!" Silverpaw heard some cat say," Finally!" Silverpaw growled softly as she saw a dark brown tom and white she-cat run into the clearing first. *The tom must be Thistlestar*, she thought. A*nd the she-cat is Lighteye.* Dawnpaw had described her in particular with much detail.

The warriors came afterwards, along with a huge stink that reminded her of rotting fish. The warriors were mostly brown and black, with some white mixed in. Sitting apart from the other clans, they gazed at everyone with hostility. Runningstar yowled to the Clans, silencing the last minute murmurs of conversation.

"Cats of all Clans," he mewed," ThunderClan's territory is plentiful with prey and peaceful for the most part. Two days ago, there was a badger who decided that it fancied our territory." Runningstar flexed his claws. "Our warriors soon showed it otherwise. Also, our deputy is now teaching every ThunderClan cat how to fish, so we may have a plentiful food supply in leaf-bare."

"What?" Silverpaw growled, leaping to her feet. All around the clearing, the other RiverClan cats were growling. Emberstar hissed on his branch, but not to Runningstar, to his own clan.

"RiverClan, sit down!" he ordered. "If ThunderClan wants to be greedy prey-thieves, it's their problem."

Silverpaw sat down, happy that Emberstar at least called them prey-thieves. Runningstar sat down and gestured to Swiftstar, the WindClan leader. She sat up and curled her tail around her paws.

"WindClan has really nothing to report," the grey cat said. "Prey is plentiful and there is no trouble, inside or out of our borders." Now it was Emberstar's turn.

The red tom's glance swept over each cat in the clearing until he meowed," RiverClan has made two new apprentices, Silverpaw and

Dawnpaw." Silverpaw sat up in shock, knowing that every cat's eyes would be on her.

"Only one is here tonight," Emberstar went on," And the other is at camp, healing from the wounds that ShadowClan warriors gave her!"

The clearing held their breath.

"Our brave warrior Ferntail is dead," he snarled," and several more warriors injured from two cowardly attacks on our patrols by ShadowClan!" Immediately ShadowClan and WindClan warriors began talking excitedly about the new turn in the gathering.

"So," Emberstar said, turning to Thistlestar. "What do you have to say for yourself, fox dung?"

Thistlestar opened his eyes calmly. "I'm glad you brought that little problem up, Emberstar."

"It's not a little problem," Emberstar growled. He was practically frothing at the mouth. "A warrior died! Two patrols were attacked cowardly! This is not 'little' at the least!"

"Emberstar," the ShadowClan leader said. He opened his large eyes, whose yellowish glow looked down at all of the cats. "ShadowClan needs more territory, and the only way to get it is from either RiverClan or ThunderClan." Runningstar drew back on his branch, hissing.

"You can try to take territory from ThunderClan," he snarled," but you'll have to pay the price for it!"

"Relax, Runningstar," Thistlestar said bluntly. "I'm taking it from RiverClan." He looked down from his branch at Emberstar, who stood with fur bristling. "Emberstar, ShadowClan is formally declaring war on you and RiverClan." There was a gasp, and Silverpaw hissed loudly.

"That little piece of mouse dung!" she clawed at the dirt and turned to Softwing. "He won't get away with both ears, right? Is Emberstar going to attack him?"

"Silverpaw," Softwing said, twitching her tail. "You know that the Gathering is a time of peace! Emberstar would never dare attack another Clan leader!"

"Well, it obviously isn't peaceful now" she muttered, before turning her gaze back to the Great Oak. Emberstar waved his thick red tail.

Hissing, he said," And RiverClan will be ready, you coward. We'll wait for your fox-hearted tricks— no doubt you use them. ShadowClan has never played fair." He looked at his cats and leapt off the Great Oak. "RiverClan!" he said. "We're going home." He turned back to Thistlestar. "And you better not step onto our territory when getting home, ShadowClan."

Swiftstar lashed her tail. "Then how will they get to their territory?"

"They can swim," Emberstar snarled, and disappeared into the bushes. Silverpaw raced behind him with all of her Clanmates.

Great StarClan! she thought, *a war against ShadowClan!*

Chapter Six

[image]

Dawnpaw sighed as she heard the dawn patrol burst into the clearing. They had been doing that for the past half-moon, reporting on ShadowClan warriors trespassing and stealing prey. *Do they really have to wake every cat up, though?* she thought.

Silverpaw stirred beside her sister. Her green eyes opened, pipricks of light in the semi-dark den.

"Dawn patrol again?" she asked, slurring her words.

"Yeah." Dawnpaw stood up in her nest, shaking off the pieces of moss that clung to her shoulders and sides like spiderwebs. They drifted to the dirt floor, settling like leaves falling to the ground.

"I think Tanglebrook said that we're going hunting today," Silverpaw mewed, rising up out of her nest.
"Thank StarClan!"

Dawnpaw growled. Ever since the war started, getting out of camp was next to impossible. Even using the dirt place was a hassle! *I can't wait to feel the breeze on my whiskers*, Dawnpaw thought. *There is no breeze in the elder's den.*

"Sure beats cleaning the Elder's den, right, Dawnpaw?"

Silverpaw padded lightly towards the camp clearing. Dawnpaw followed her sister to the clearing, where almost all of the cats were. The fresh-kill pile, usually in the middle had disappeared, and Dawnpaw looked down to the ground as her stomach rumbled. Silverpaw saw Tanglebrook and went over to him. The black and white cat looked even angrier than usual, spitting wordlessly and lashing his tail. Dawnpaw skidded after her sister, hoping Tanglebrook wouldn't leap on her in anger.

"Hi, Tanglebrook!" Dawnpaw said, going in front of her sister. "Are we going fishing today?"

"We're not," Tanglebrook growled. "Trying to train apprentices in a stupid, mouse-brained war against stupid, mouse-brained ShadowClan cats. It's impossible!" He ended in a splutter and began wordlessly muttering things.

"Then what are we going to do?" wailed Silverpaw. "We can't clean out the Elder's den again!"

"Yes, you can," said Iceleap, appearing behind Silverpaw. "Now go." Dawnpaw and Silverpaw looked at each other.

"I hate ShadowClan," Dawnpaw muttered, and led the way to the bramble-covered den on the other side of the camp.

"We're back," said Silverpaw as they entered the Elders' den. "Does anybody have ticks? Need more moss? We are your humble servants, sent down from StarClan, to serve you."

Both elders, Stonepad and Lakestrike were asleep, curled up in their nests. Their flanks rose and fell, and their both cat's faces were scarred by long ago, vicious battles. She growled softly at her sister.

"Don't be rude!" she said. "Do you want to have Tanglebrook clawing our ears when Stonepad and Lakestrike complain?"

Silverpaw snorted. "I'm not rude, I'm sarcastic. There's a difference."

Lakestrike stirred in her mossy nest, grey and white fur spilling out of it.

"Welcome back, Silverpaw and Dawnpaw. I'm sorry that you don't enjoy your time here, but who can blame you?" the she-cat let out a husky laugh. "When I was an apprentice, the last thing I wanted to do was spend all my time with the cranky old elders when a war's being fought."

Silverpaw shifted her paws in the dirt. "You heard that?" she murmured,"because I didn't really mean any of it, you know."

Lakestrike shook her head. "As I said, I don't blame you!"

"Do you have any ticks?" Dawnpaw offered, hoping that she wouldn't. They needed mouse bile to do that, and for that she would have to go into the forest and catch a mouse. *And though these paws are good at scooping fish*, she thought ruefully, *they're no good for catching a mouse.*

Thankfully, Lakestrike shook her head. "I don't have any, and neither does Stonepad," she lowered her voice. "I'd hear about it if he did. He's a crankerous old badger."

Dawnpaw snorted, and just as the fresh late green-leaf light filtered into the den and spilled onto the floor, Silverpaw sat down on the floor and gazed at Lakestrike pleadingly.

"Can you tell us a story?" she begged. "We haven't heard any since we were kits!"

The old she-cat sat up from her nest and started grooming her ears, where the fur had started sticking straight up.

In-between licks she mewed," Sure. Do you have a specific one?"

"Do you have a story about the leader before Emberstar?" Dawnpaw asked, curious about the times when the clans had recently come to the lake.

Lakestrike sighed. "I don't remember who that was, apprentices, but I do remember the leader of RiverClan during the Great Battle against the Dark Forest." Dawnpaw sank to her belly in to the ground, Silverpaw next to her.

"Her name was Mistystar," Lakestrike began," and as I remember my elders telling me about her. She was really all alone in life. Her medicine cat didn't believe in StarClan, and all but one of her kits died."

"Who was the kit who survived?" Silverpaw asked.

"Well," Lakestrike said, closing her eyes. "I'm not exactly sure, but I think it was something along the lines of Reedwhisker— no,

Reedstar."

"They were both leaders?" Dawnpaw asked in amazement. "Was that the leader before Emberstar?"

"Oh no," Lakestrike mewed, "Reedstar was maybe two, three leaders before Emberstar."

Suddenly, Stonepad snorted and rolled onto his side, his tail hanging over the side of the nest.

"Are you young cats talking about Reedstar?" he asked, voice drowsy with sleep. "Silverpaw? Dawnpaw?"

"Yes, Stonepad," Silverpaw said, drawing her paw in the dirt.

"Funny thing," he said, gazing into the roof of the den.

"What's funny about Reedstar?" asked Dawnpaw. "He was just a cat, RiverClan's leader at one point."

"Well," Stonepad said," I had a dream the other day, and my mother came. She reminded me of Reedstar for some reason."

"StarClan?" Silverpaw said whimsically. "Was it from them?"

"Why did she remind you of Reedstar?" Dawnpaw asked impatiently.
Stonepad turned his amber gaze to her blue one. "Because Reedstar, and Mistystar, and an entire long, long line of Clan cats— are your kin."

There was a scuffling in the corner, and Dawnpaw whipped around, tasting the air for ShadowClan invaders. But when she turned, there was only the faint scent of RiverClan, herbs and a flash of a orange tail as it left the Elders den.

Chapter Seven

[image]

"This is out of control!" yowled Emberstar. Silverpaw drew closer to Dawnpaw as they stared at the bones that were littering the clearing.

He stepped closer to Minnowtail and hissed," This is not a war! It is merely an opportunity for those ShadowClan warriors to take advantage of our prey-rich territory!" Silverpaw snarled angrily. Dawnpaw looked at her, the newly healed scar on her face evident.

"Well, someone's angry," she commented.

"Aren't you?" Silverpaw asked," Those wretched ShadowClan cats have been stealing our prey! Stinking up our land with their filthy scent! That's enough to make any cat spit, and that's not it!"

"I'm mad," Dawnpaw reassured her," but I'm not acting like a badger who lost all of it's food."

Emberstar stood up. "Cats of RiverClan, I know that this is very dangerous, but I am proposing to send a party of cats into ShadowClan territory for—"

"What?" screeched Tanglebrook,"In ShadowClan territory? They'll be ripped to pieces!"

Emberstar glared at him. "For a peace-talk," he mewed. "And we will send the cats who are least likely to be attacked by ShadowClan patrols." Tanglebrook snorted, but Silverpaw saw his eyes flash with worry in the direction of his apprentice. *So he does care about Dawnpaw*, Silverpaw thought. *He must think that she will be going to ShadowClan territory. Not like Emberstar would ever pick an apprentice to do something exciting*, she added ruefully. Emberstar's gaze swept over his Clan. With his thick reddish brown tail he picked out individual members out of the group.

"Minnowtail will go," he mewed," and Silverpaw, and Aspencloud." *Me?* Silverpaw thought, sitting up straighter. Dawnpaw's tail tightened around Silverpaw, begging her silently not to go.

"Aspencloud and Silverpaw?" Iceleap growled. "Are you sure about that, Emberstar? We have no other medicine cat, and I've spent only spent a little more than three moons training Silverpaw up. I don't want to lose her in the claws of fox-hearted ShadowClan warriors!" Emberstar looked at Aspencloud, who was sitting a little aways from the rest of the Clan, her eyes focused somewhere behind Silverpaw.

"Aspencloud," he mewed," Has StarClan given you any sign or message about danger in the ShadowClan camp."

"My dreams lately have been very confusing," Aspencloud admitted, looking at Silverpaw and Dawnpaw," but there has been nothing to suggest about a battle or something like that in the ShadowClan camp itself. Also," she added brightly," ShadowClan still follow the warrior code, and medicine cats will not be attacked."

"What have you been dreaming about?" Tanglebrook challenged. "If there is danger coming we need to know." Aspencloud ducked her head nervously.

"Oh, just cat's fighting, rivers filled with RiverClan and ShadowClan blood alike." She looked up at the Clan, fidgeting with her paws. "The dreams every cat has when the cloud of war approaches."

*She's lying*She's lying, Silverpaw thought. *But why?* Her thoughts were momentarily sidetracked by a hiss of fear.

"Apprentices can still be attacked," Softwing hissed, her brown eyes taught with worry. She looked at Silverpaw, then back at Emberstar. "Would you really send an apprentice in ShadowClan territory, against warriors she's not even well-trained to fight yet?"

"I will go to ShadowClan territory!" Silverpaw burst out. "I'm a good enough fighter, and so is Aspencloud and Minnowtail. And just think," she mewed to all of RiverClan," If this peace-talk is successful, so many RiverClan and ShadowClan lives will be saved.

Isn't this worth it?" Dawnpaw purred loudly, and licked her sister on the shoulder.

"Well said," she murmured. "You're like a real warrior now! Going on a warrior mission to ShadowClan!"

"It's settled," Emberstar said. "Minnowtail, Aspencloud, and Silverpaw will leave at sun-high today." He looked at those three cats. "May I suggest to eat well and pray to StarClan. For this to work, we're going to need all the help we can get."

Silverpaw stepped out of the camp and looked at the giant sun, which was rapidly going across the sky. Dawnpaw's pelt pressed against hers, wished farewell wordlessly. Aspencloud and Minnowtail glanced back at Silverpaw.

"Ready?" the deputy asked, twitching her orange tail in anticipation. Dawnpaw pressed her nose into her litter-mate's fur.

"Stay safe," she whispered," and don't let those ShadowClan cats bother you."

"I'll be back soon," Silverpaw said, watching her sister go back into camp with one last anguished look.

Am I lying? Silverpaw wondered as the three she-cats bounded through the territory. *Will I come back from this patrol?* Silverpaw glanced up at the sky again, wishing she could see the Silverpelt. The comforting sight of her twinkling warrior ancestors always restored hope inside of her. After passing the final break of trees, Minnowtail turned back to her companions.

"If the ShadowClan cats attack, the first priority will be getting Aspencloud to safety," she looked at Silverpaw. "So fight your hardest, and don't forget that I'll be fighting alongside you. Don't be scared."

"I will give my life to protect my clanmates," Silverpaw said, feeling like a real warrior. *So this is what being a RiverClan warrior is*, she thought. *I like it— caring for the weaker and protecting our clan mates, even with the cost of our lives.*

"Let's go," Minnowtail said, and led Aspencloud and Silverpaw to the ShadowClan border.

Silverpaw could smell the ShadowClan warriors before she saw them. If she had seen them, she would be tempted to run all the way back to camp. *They're huge!* Silverpaw thought, trying not the wail out loud. She would seem weak if she did.

The patrol was made up out of a white she-cat with only one eye, a black she-cat, and an orange tabby tom, who looked disturbingly similar to Minnowtail. When the warriors saw the patrol of RiverClan cats, they picked up the pace and approached the border, growling angrily. Silverpaw felt weak in the knees and thought that she might topple onto the ground. Suddenly, she felt Aspencloud's orange tail wrap around her shoulders.

"Be brave, Silverpaw," she hissed softly, not taking her eyes off the ShadowClan cats. "Courage is one thing that nobody, not even StarClan, can take away from you." Silverpaw looked into the medicine cats eyes. Somehow, she felt like Aspencloud was talking not just about the ShadowClan warriors, but something else. Before she could ask about it though, Lighteye, the white she-cat let out a yowl.

"Hey! What are you doing in our border?" Minnowtail stepped forward until she and Lighteye stood nose-to-nose, separated only by the scent of both RiverClan and ShadowClan. As the rest of the cats behind Lighteye unsheathed their claws, Silverpaw gulped. Please StarClan, she thought, protect us!

"We have a message for Thistlestar," announced Minnowtail. The ShadowClan cats smirked.

"What kind of message?" hissed the orange tom, his voice barely audible.

"Do you expect of to tell you words meant for your leader?" growled Minnowtail. Her fur was bristling, and she lashed her tail like a reed by the river in anger.

Lighteye sneered and turned to her patrol. "You stay here. I'll take

them to camp." The white cat turned back and flicked her tail. "Come on," she hissed," unless you want me to kill you first." Silverpaw curled her lip.

Aspencloud went across the scent-line first, Minnowtail following. Silverpaw extended a paw and looked into the hostile gazes of the ShadowClan warriors. *I will not show fear,* Silverpaw decided, and padded after her Clanmates, into enemy territory.

Chapter Eight

Dawnpaw watched her littermate's tail fade away. Even after it had disappeared, she stood outside of the camp, hoping that they would come back soon. The white and orange she-cat turned slowly to face the busy RiverClan camp and sighed. Through the bushes she saw that her clanmates were scrambling around, repairing dens and making plans for fishing and defending camp. Emberstar organized the patrols, and Aspencloud left camp to gather herbs. Nobody was paying attention to her.

It's not against the Warrior Code, Dawnpaw thought, her paws itching to splash in the lake or the small stream. Rocks and dirt sprayed across the path as she ran through a bundle of trees and undergrowth. Her paws pounded on the ground, and she didn't stop running until she stood at the edge of the babbling river. Although it looked calm, Dawnpaw knew that underneath the surface there could be riptides waiting to pull her in.

"Never go in the water without a partner," Tanglebrook said, padding up from behind his apprentice.

Dawnpaw whirled around to see the white and black tom staring at her with a peculiar expression of his face.

"I'm sorry, Tanglebrook,"she exclaimed, shifting her paws. "I wasn't going to go in the water, I promise!"

"Don't tell me that you are just here to look at the river," he mewed calmly. Looking at Dawnpaw he added," Oh, don't worry. Almost every RiverClan apprentice has gotten caught trying to swim alone."

"Can I?" asked Dawnpaw. "I haven't been swimming or haven't done anything in ages."

"Try a quarter-moon," Tanglebrook grumbled. He flicked his tail

towards the water, which grazed Dawnpaw's nose. "There's a school of carp down there. Why don't you try out your diving skills?"

Dawnpaw stood carefully at a ledge that was a fox-length above the water. Through the greenish blue water, she could see black shapes swimming in the water, carefree. She dropped into a crouch on the ledge and unsheathed her claws. Leaping off of the ledge, she hit the water and sank down into the world of water.

Bubbles floated past Dawnpaw's fur and up to the air above, but she didn't pay attention them. Quick as a fox, she pushed forward with all four paws and grabbed a carp with her jaws.

The fish struggled against her grip, and Dawnpaw bit down on the tender fish slightly, until blood drifted through the water and the fish stopped struggling. Dawnpaw kicked her way to the surface and threw the fish down on the grassy bank. Blood slowly ran down the stained scales, gathering in a pool underneath the fish as she gasped for breath.

"Dawnpaw!" Tanglebrook said. "Why is the fish punctured? What cat will eat that?" Dawnpaw stared at the bloody carp, imaging blood trickling down Silverpaw's beautiful pelt, matting the fur in clumps. Her sister could be killed just as easily as the fish. She shivered, paws numb.

"Dawnpaw!" Tanglebrook growled. Dawnpaw turned to him, her eyes hollow and full of fear.

"Silverpaw won't die," he said, pressing his warm black and white pelt against hers.

"StarClan let Ferntail die," Dawnpaw said. "How do we know that they won't let Silverpaw die as well? For all we know, she could be dead right now!" Tanglebrook looked at the ridge of trees that blocked the river from view, then back at the fish, whose blood had stopped flowing.

"It was Ferntail's time to die," a cat said,from behind Dawnpaw. "You and Silverpaw— you two have a great destiny. Your time to die is not yet." Dawnpaw whirled around, claws unsheathed in case

of a ShadowClan warrior and braced herself for an attack. Instead, a thick grey-pelted tom sat in front of her. He was not one of her clanmates, but still carried the distinct scent of RiverClan. With stars shining in his eyes, the tom stared at Dawnpaw.

"StarClan has instructed me to tell you that your time will come, but not now. You and Silverpaw have a greater destiny that has ever been written in the stars— greater then Dovewing, Lionblaze, Jayfeather, or even Firestar's."

"What?" Dawnpaw gasped, but the grey tom had vanished, leaving only the memories of his words ringing in her ears.

"Dawnpaw?" Tanglebrook said, looking at his bewildered apprentice. "What's wrong? Did you see a ShadowClan warrior?" He opened his mouth to taste the air.

"N-no," said Dawnpaw, sitting up. She met his eyes and shook her head. "I-I didn't see anything."

That is, nothing but a warrior from StarClan.

Chapter Nine

Silverpaw swallowed as Thistlestar entered his den. Aspencloud and Minnowtail were sitting on both sides of her, their orange pelts pressed against her silver one. *He's huge!* Thought Silverpaw. *StarClan help me if he attacks*. The huge grey and white tom's paw steps radiated hostility. He growled as he padded towards the she-cats, and Silverpaw marveled how although Aspencloud and Minnowtail were stiff as trees, they didn't flinch from the leader's menacing presence

"Why are you here?" he asked, each word a slow and menacing growl. Minnowtail raised her chin and looked the ShadowClan leader in the eye.

"Emberstar sent us to reason with you," she meowed. "He wants to know why ShadowClan has declared war on RiverClan. Why your clanmates are attacking mine so brutally."

Thistlestar sneered, revealing long fangs stained yellow. His fur bristled. "Does your miserable excuse for a leader really think that I would tell you what this war is really about?"

"Don't insult Emberstar," hissed Silverpaw, narrowing her eyes. The leader looked at her, momentarily surprised. A split second later, hatred spread across his features when he realized that an apprentice had disrespected him. Silverpaw bunched her muscles, ready to defend herself if Thistlestar attempted to attack her. *Although, I'd probably be torn to pieces if he did*, Silverpaw admitted.

"Get out," hissed Thistlestar, narrowing his eyes. He stood, standing rigidly on all four paws. "Go back to your territory and tell your oh-so-precious Emberstar that this war is not over."

The RiverClan cats rose to their paws and followed the grey and white cat to the entrance of his den, head held high. Outside of it, all of the available warriors stood, claws unsheathed. Silverpaw

looked around the camp, and at all of the warriors radiating hatred. *Will we be attacked?* She wondered.

"Lighteye, Grasspaw, Thorntalon! Escort the RiverClan cats to their border," Thistlestar snarled.

When called, the three cats leapt to their paws and circled the other cats, hissing. Silverpaw felt like the sheep that the elders had told her and Dawnpaw about. Grasspaw fell beside Silverpaw and circled her, acting like she was the one to be afraid of, not Minnowtail, the trained warrior.

As the mixed patrols traveled through ShadowClan territory, Silverpaw marveled at how different it was from her own. The pines dropped fragile twigs and needles, making hunting difficult. *It is so much easier to sit and catch a fish*, Silverpaw observed, looking at the squirrels that sat in the branches chattering loudly. *All you need is a river, patience, and quick reactions.*

Soon, the pine trees thinned out and the stench of Twolegs came into Silverpaw's nostrils. She wrinkled her nose. Grasspaw marched alongside the RiverClan apprentice as they traveled across the small, deserted thunderpath. As soon as they had passed the half-bridge, Silverpaw started smelling RiverClan scent again.

"Don't come back to our camp again, fish-cats," Grasspaw snarled. "Or we'll tear you limb from limb."

The RiverClan cats stepped across their border and stared at the ShadowClan cats who were doing the same. Finally, Lighteye gathered her patrol and turned around without any words.

Great StarClan, that was an experience, Silverpaw thought. All sense of cooperation between Clans left her as she reared up onto her hind legs and yowled after the retreating ShadowClan cats.

"Hey, Grasspaw!" she yowled. The apprentice pricked her ears put didn't turn around. "Thank you so much for that kind escort. Maybe next time, save the snarling and nastiness for someone who actually cares, and someone that you could beat in battle. You'd have a reason then!"

Grasspaw turned around, growling so that Silverpaw could hear it from her side of the border.

"What it StarClan are you doing, Silverpaw?" Hissed Aspencloud, cuffing her ears. "What would we do if they attacked?" Silverpaw bent her head.

"Sorry," she mumbled. "They just make me so angry!" Minnowtail smiled slightly and started trotting back to camp.

Aspencloud leaned closer to the apprentice and murmured,"Store up that energy, because one day, you will need the hate that grows inside of your heart. We do not need any more violence today."

Chapter Ten

Dawnpaw sat underneath the entrance of the apprentice den, washing her ears. She narrowed her eyes at the empty camp. A growl rose out of her throat as she remembered how Softwing told she and Silverpaw that they were too young to fight against ShadowClan.

I*'m left at camp like an elder or kit!* She thought furiously. Lashing her fluffy orange and white tail, she padded to the middle of the camp, where Silverpaw and Minnowtail sat patiently.

"Minnowtail," said Silverpaw as Dawnpaw approached," can you please take us to the battle? We're terrific fighters!"

Minnowtail purred slightly. "You heard what Emberstar said. You have only been apprentices for three moons."

"I went into ShadowClan territory a moon ago!" Protested Silverpaw, fur bristling. "If I was good enough to go there, then why can't I fight now?"

"It's not up for discussion," hissed Minnowtail. Dawnpaw and Silverpaw ducked their heads, ashamed.

Minnowtail began pacing around the two sisters. "Emberstar and your mentors want me to show you some new battle moves," she explained. "Hopefully, next time we have a battle you can be added to our ranks. Sit up!" she ordered. Silverpaw and Dawnpaw sat up to attention, their eyes wide and alert.

"I'm going to teach you one of the most prized moves that RiverClan warriors have on land," she meowed. "Dawnpaw, come in front of me." Dawnpaw nervously stepped in front of the RiverClan deputy, the tips of her tail twitching.

"Attack me," Minnowtail offered. Dawnpaw squatted down and leapt at the she-cat, serving to intercept her as Minnowtail dove out of the way. Bouncing out of the way of a skillful swipe, Dawnpaw rose onto her hind legs and was ready to bring them down with crushing force onto the deputy's side. Like she was catching a fish, Minnowtail jabbed Dawnpaw's legs, sending her sprawling onto the ground.

In a heart beat, she jumped onto the oversized apprentice and hissed ferociously.

"What happened?" Dawnpaw asked, rolling out of the deputy's grip. Minnowtail beckoned for Silverpaw to come closer with her tail.

"On your hind legs," she explained," there is a tendon that runs across. Can you feel it?" Both apprentices nodded after running a paw across it. "If you hit that, the cat attacked will collapse onto the ground. You must be fast, though," she warned," because the shock wears off almost immediately."

"Use it to your advantage, and pounce onto your enemy." Minnowtail nodded. "All right. Let's see you two try it."

Dawnpaw lashed her tail. "Come get me, you ShadowClan scum!"

"Say the scum herself, huh?" Silverpaw retorted, and leapt at her sister. Together they wrestled, until Dawnpaw was sent crashing again onto the ground. Before Silverpaw could pounce, Dawnpaw jumped out of the way and slashed her with a paw.

"Good thing your claws are sheathed," panted Silverpaw.

Dawnpaw lunged at her, swiping at her hind legs. As her sister started to fall, she braced both paws on her shoulders and pushed downward. Using her weight, Dawnpaw pinned Silverpaw down until she stopped squirming. They looked at Minnowtail.

"Now can we go to fight?" Dawnpaw pleaded. Minnowtail stared at her, the answer broadcasted in her amber eyes.

"Good," the deputy said, curling her tail around her paws. "It's a relatively easy move, the tricky thing is to actually land the blow.

Keep practicing," she said, turning around. "I have to go the dirt place."

Dawnpaw whirled around in a battle crouch, ready to try again. Instead, thought, Silverpaw looked at her with mischief brimming in the icy blue depths.

"What?" Dawnpaw asked, sitting up. She drew a paw over each spray of whiskers.

"You don't think that we're really going to stay here?" challenged Silverpaw.

"I thought we were," meowed Dawnpaw.

"We need to go to the battle!" Silverpaw said. "Our clanmates need us."

Dawnpaw looked back at the nursery. Minnowtail had not yet emerged. She is sort of right, Dawnpaw thought, and turned back to her sister, who was bouncing up and down on her toes in excitement.

"I'll come," said Dawnpaw. "But if we get killed, I'm killing you."

Chapter Eleven

Silverpaw crouched outside of the camp, pricking her ears for sounds of clumsy ShadowClan warriors. She pushed away all thoughts about how Minnowtail would hunt them down once she found they were gone. *I'm doing this for my Clan,* she thought.

"The coast is clear," she hissed. Dawnpaw emerged from the bush, looking bored and unappreciative of the information.

"I could've told you that,"she said, "Without all the tasting the air and whatnot." Silverpaw ignored her and trotted through the trees, silver tail waving. Dawnpaw was beside her, pricking her ears. Silverpaw heard the rushing of the river has the two sisters came closer to it, and stopped as Dawnpaw paused in her pace.

She lifted one paw and motioned to be quiet. Silverpaw and Dawnpaw were silent together, until the orange and white apprentice broke the silence.

"I can hear the battle," Dawnpaw announced, and flattened her ears. "Come on, we have to be careful."

"I better go first," Silverpaw said. "Orange and white isn't very good spying material." Dawnpaw snorted, but she let her sister lead the small patrol. Silverpaw crouched into a hunting position, and slowly crept through the forest. When the RiverClan cats cleared most of the trees, and could see the river, Silverpaw saw and heard the battle. She stopped, and Dawnpaw bumped into her. Both apprentices peered at the battlefield in front of them like curious owls.

ShadowClan and RiverClan cats were scattered everywhere, in the water and out of it, and some even battling on the ledges of rock

that were suspended over the foaming water. Rings of blood showed in the shallows of the river, and Silverpaw could see that many rocks were slick with crimson.

All of the cats had wounds on them, and Silverpaw could see that Emberstar was already bleeding heavily from scratches down his flank, yet he leapt into battle again and again, screeching among the ranks of warriors. Silverpaw looked back at her sister. Dawnpaw was pressed to the ground, ears flat and eyes screwed shut.

"It's horrible," she said. Silverpaw nosed her sister to her paws. She wasn't going to let Dawnpaw know that she felt the same way.

"How about we hide in those bushes over there," Silverpaw said, pointing her nose to the line of scruffy vegetation that was about five fox-lengths for the bank of the river. "They won't see us," she said.

At least I hope they won't, she thought. The two sisters bundled together underneath a row of prickly holly bushes. Silverpaw's pelt stood up in spikes as she listened to her clanmates screeching in pain.

"We shouldn't have come," said Dawnpaw. Silverpaw looked back at her, and the orange and white apprentice stared at her mournfully.

"Why not?" she asked.

"It was when you were in ShadowClan," Dawnpaw said. She let her gaze drift to the battle they could see through the branches. "I was with Tanglebrook, and a-a StarClan cat came to me."

Silverpaw pricked her ears, secretly afraid that Dawnpaw was going insane. "Are you sure? It could've been mist rising from the river or something." Dawnpaw bristled, almost as spiky as the holly bushes they sheltered under.

"I know the difference between a large grey cat with stars in his paws and eyes than from mist," she spat.

"Okay," Silverpaw said, inching away from her sister. "What did he say?"

"He said that both of us have a great destiny and it was not our time to die." Dawnpaw's blue eyes stared into Silverpaw's green ones. "Do think it was an omen telling us not to take part in this battle?"

Silverpaw shrugged, still thinking it was mist Dawnpaw had seen. "We'll ask Aspencloud, okay? Maybe she can figure it out." *Or give Dawnpaw some poppy seeds for shock,* Silverpaw added mentally, a purr rising in her throat. A shriek interrupted both sisters from their thoughts.

"You can't attack a medicine cat!"

Silverpaw looked at Dawnpaw and hissed, "Aspencloud's in trouble!"

Chapter Twelve

Dawnpaw jumped, fur bristling as she heard Aspencloud's yelp. She and Silverpaw locked gazes, then both dropped into an attack crouch. Dawnpaw looked around frantically, swiveling her ears to find out where Aspencloud's fanatic cry had come from.

"Says who?" came a smooth mew. "StarClan?" There was bitterness in the cat's tone as she said the name of their warrior ancestors.

"This way," Silverpaw said, swiftly stepping towards a low-hanging willow tree. Dawnpaw suppressed a hiss that her sister was going ahead of her, then saw that it was a good strategy. *Silverpaw's better in fighting then I am*, Dawnpaw thought. She followed her sister silently over the ground, flattening her ears to the screeches coming from the battlefield only a couple of fox-lengths away.

"Tell me what the prophecy said!" An unnatural snarl came. Dawnpaw looked at her sister at the other cat's meow. Silverpaw wasn't looking at her, only at the sheet of willow separating the sisters from the ongoing flight. The two apprentices crouched at the very edge of the willow's trailing leaves, where they could see dark shadows flash behind the curtain.

"What should we do?" asked Dawnpaw. She turned to the river, where the battle showed no signs of ending. "Should we get a warrior to help us?"

"No," said Silverpaw. She flattened her ears. "There's no time! We're the only ones who can help Aspencloud. We need to attack." She let out a long hiss.

"Tell me! Or you'll become a star-crazed idiot soon!" Another infuriated yowl came. Dawnpaw nervously crouched again beside her sister.

"Tell me when to leap. It has to be soon," she whispered. Silverpaw acknowledged her meow with a flick of her tail. Dawnpaw began tensing her haunches, anxiously racking her brain for what Tanglebrook had told her about battles.

"You stupid medicine cat, tell me what Jayfeather, Mistystar, Tallstar, and Tawnypelt told you!" There was a yelp of pain. *This won't be like the dawn patrol*, Dawnpaw told herself fiercely. *I'm older and well-trained now. No one's going to die.*

"Now!" growled Silverpaw. She leapt through the curtain of willow, Dawnpaw close behind. Dawnpaw landed on the moist ground, teeth bared.

"Dawnpaw, Silverpaw?" came Aspencloud's voice. The medicine cat's orange face looked at them from around the trunk of the tree. She looked up nervously. "You two need to go! Right now!" Silverpaw sat up.

"Why?" she asked. She began padding towards Aspencloud. Dawnpaw tasted the air tentatively, the smell of ShadowClan entering her nostrils.

"Wait!" Dawnpaw said, holding up a paw. "Silverpaw, there's another cat here." Silverpaw spun around the stare at her sister, when a white ball of fur and claws hurled itself from behind the huge trunk and dug its claws onto Silverpaw. Aspencloud growled and leapt onto the cat, trying to pierce her teeth into the scruff.

With one massive jerk of her hind legs, the white cat sent Aspencloud flying into the tree trunk. Dawnpaw sat up and looked from Aspencloud, and back to her sister, who was spitting furiously underneath claws. Aspencloud can take care of herself, Dawnpaw said, and yowled furiously. As the white she-cat looked up, Silverpaw burst up explosively. Dawnpaw swiped towards the cat's face, and faltered as she saw that the she-cat's entire left eye was missing, a pink piece of skin stretched tightly over.

Lighteye, Dawnpaw thought. She remembered the fateful dawn patrol, and how she had seen this exact she-cat standing over Ferntail's body. *This cat killed my father*, she realized, and swiped

again, adrenaline pulsing through her veins. The she-cat drew back and stared at the two apprentices. Even though Dawnpaw was large for a cat as young as she, Lighteye towered over them considerably.

"Apprentices," she snarled. "You'll be easy to beat."

"Think that," Silverpaw said. "And we'll gladly prove you wrong." She folded her ears and growled fiercely. Lighteye didn't bat an eyelash. With a yowl, the silver apprentice hurled herself at the white she-cat, taking a fluffy white tail in her jaws. Lighteye growled and swiped at Silverpaw's shoulder, leaving a bloody trail after it.

Dawnpaw hissed, and sprang up into the air, timing her leap and descent perfectly so she landed on Lighteye's back. The white cat paused from the shock of the blow, and then shook herself, trying to get the apprentice off.

"Yes, Dawnpaw!" Silverpaw hissed. "Dig your claws in!" Dawnpaw unsheathed her claws and gripped Lighteye tighter. With a yowl of rage, the she-cat flipped over onto her back, smothering Dawnpaw. The she-cat then flipped back over to expose Dawnpaw's soft white and orange belly. She slashed downward when Silverpaw threw her into the tree, just as Lighteye had done to Aspencloud.

Dawnpaw yowled and joined her sister as they swiped simultaneously, driving Lighteye back into the willow's leaves. There was fear in the she-cat's eye, and once Silverpaw slashed her nose so there was a crease in it, Lighteye hissed and ran off into the battle, blood dripping onto the grass. Dawnpaw panted, then remembered Aspencloud. She padded to the trunk of the willow tree, where the orange medicine cat was unmoving in a heap of fur.

"Aspencloud?" she asked," Are you okay?" The medicine cat coughed, and slowly rolled over to face Dawnpaw.

"I'm fine," she said, standing up. She winced slightly, and Dawnpaw noticed for the first time the claw marks on her flanks and shoulder. "Thank you for helping me," she said. Dawnpaw nodded. Silverpaw came up from behind Aspencloud, and announced triumphantly," Lighteye is back in the battle now. Good job, Dawnpaw!" Dawnpaw

ignored her sister's comment. "Aspencloud," she said hesitantly. "Before we started fighting Lighteye, we, uh, heard her say some things."

"What prophecy was she talking about?" Silverpaw asked. Dawnpaw was taken aback. She hadn't expected her sister to be paying attention. Aspencloud froze and stared at the two apprentices.

"Is it about us?" Dawnpaw guessed, nervous by her intent gaze. The medicine cat didn't move.

"Well?" Silverpaw said, shaking Aspencloud from her trance.

"Yes," she said. Dawnpaw's jaw dropped. "It's about you."

"Can you tell us?" Silverpaw asked. Dawnpaw widened her eyes and leaned closer to the medicine cat. *I'm in a prophecy*! She thought. *Just like all of those other cats before me; Firestar, Crookedstar, Jayfeather, Lionblaze, Squirrelstar, Dovewing...*

"No," Aspencloud yelped. She turned into the shadows, calming down. "I cannot tell you your destiny." Then, she padded away from them, leaving them to their own thoughts.

Chapter Thirteen

Silverpaw glanced at her sister, whose mouth was open. She playfully butted her on the shoulder.

"Shut your mouth before the fish wriggles out," she told Dawnpaw. Dawnpaw turned to Silverpaw, her mouth still agape.

"We're in a prophecy, Silverpaw! How are you not excited about this?"

"I am," Silverpaw replied. "But not as much as you. We can't think about the prophecy now, though. We can ask Aspencloud later." Dawnpaw looked blank, and Silverpaw sighed. "There's a battle going on, fish-brain!"

The orange and white apprentice shrugged. "We're not allowed to fight."

Silverpaw stared at her sister. "That's seriously stopping you?"

"Like I said before," the blue eyes of Dawnpaw were solemn. "If we die, then what would happen to the prophecy?"

"Dawnpaw!" Silverpaw said. "Please?" The orange and white cat just shook her head mournfully.

"Fine, I'll go alone," Silverpaw hissed, and stomped out from the willow's branches. Looking from side to side, she made sure that Aspencloud wasn't following. Silverpaw dashed from the willow tree, straight into the thick of the battle. She searched amongst the wrestling for the snowy white pelt of her mentor.

Then she saw her, her thick pelt turning grey in the water. Iceleap stood in the shallows of the river, panting. Blood dripped down her

pelt, and turned the water pink. Silverpaw jumped back as two cats came rolling in front of her.

"Iceleap!" she screeched. Iceleap looked up and her eyes widened in surprise, seeing the silver apprentice crouching amongst the battling cats.

"Silverpaw?" she yowled," Get over here right now!" Silverpaw staggered to her feet and ran to the edge of the water. She waded in, until she and her mentor stood together.

"What are you doing here?" Iceleap hissed. "This is a battle, not an outing for kits!" Silverpaw opened her mouth, but a white tail enveloped her. "No excuses. One thing will be for sure, though. You will not be going to the Gathering this moon."

"Iceleap! Emberstar!" came a call from the shore. Curlfeather stood at the edge of the river, eyes wide and flank bloody. "Behind—" her call was cut short as a thick pelted tom leaped onto her and sent them tumbling into the dusty shore. Iceleap and Silverpaw looked behind them, fur bristling and ears flat. Silverpaw took in breath as she saw Thistlestar, glaring at both of them triumphantly. A river of blood ran from underneath his paws and into the river, turning the stones dark and slippery, and staining the river darker than before.

Underneath his paws, was... Emberstar.

Silverpaw waited outside in the clearing like many of her Clanmates. Dawnpaw sat beside her, tail curling around her back. They had forgotten the argument about whether to go into battle or not, for all that was on their minds, like all of their Clanmates, was worry for their leader.

Aspencloud emerged from the small, bramble covered den, blood covering her paws and pelt. Although the battle had been hard for the warriors, the medicine cat was rushing around trying to heal everyone and make sure that Emberstar didn't die.

"How is Emberstar?" mewed Softwing.

"Emberstar is okay," she said. "But needs rest. He will be in his den

until moon high, at the earliest." None of the RiverClan cats moved, and Aspencloud lashed her tail. "You're not doing any good sulking and waiting for him, you know. Minnowtail!"

The deputy padded out from Emberstar's den. "Yes, Aspencloud?" she asked carefully. The medicine cat was always cranky after a battle, but the cats of RiverClan knew how to maneuver around her.

"Send the least injured cats on patrol," Aspencloud said. "I want Curlfeather, Tanglebrook, Fallowspring, and Carppelt in my den. Now." As the named cats limped to her den, Dawnpaw let out a sigh of relief.

"Good. I thought Tanglebrook was going to stare at me all day." Minnowtail walked to the center of the clearing and started assembling patrols.

"Softwing, Poppythorn, and Eeljaw," she said," go to the lake to hunt. I know that it's harder to fish, but all of the prey was scattered during the battle." The cats nodded and raced out of camp, their battle-weary muscles aching.

"Iceleap," said Minnowtail. The white she-cat tore her gaze from Silverpaw. "Can you take Troutpaw and Bramblepaw out, please? Their final assessment was scheduled for today, and I would like to continue as normal as possible." Silverpaw saw Troutpaw and Bramblepaw sit up straight on the edge of the assembled cats. Warriors! She thought enviously.

Silverpaw's mentor nodded. "What shall they be tested on?"

"Hunting," said the deputy. "Both on land and in the water. They already had their battle assessment, so that doesn't need to be done."

"Come on," Iceleap mewed to the older apprentices. The two toms followed the white cat out of camp, their tails straight and ears pointed.

"That'll be us one day," said Silverpaw.

"If we stop breaking the warrior code," Dawnpaw hissed softly.

Silverpaw's heart sunk. *What happened to my fun-loving sister?* She thought.

A heap of fish lay in the middle of the camp. Most of the cats had already eaten, but there were still large pieces in the pile. It was almost moon high, and when the RiverClan cats would usually be settling down in their nests, they were seated in front of Emberstar's den, waiting for their badly injured leader.

"I can't believe that they passed their assessment," muttered Silverpaw, looking at Bramblepaw and Troutpaw. "Now they'll be even more annoying!"

"They never were," Dawnpaw mewed, confused. Her ears stretched tall as she exclaimed," Emberstar!"

The reddish brown tom was limping out of his bramble-covered den, moving slowly as not to break the carefully placed cobwebs on his wound that caused him to lose a life.

"Cats of RiverClan," he said. All of the murmuring ceased, and Aspencloud came out of her den, followed by Tanglebrook, whose paw had refused to stop bleeding for ages.

"I could not be more proud of you for your courage in battle today," Emberstar mewed. "Although I did lose a life, and we lost the battle, the war against ShadowClan is not over." He bared his teeth.

"ShadowClan did not fight today with the warrior code. They fought viciously, like rogues."

"You can say that again," remarked Curlfeather. "They wouldn't let us surrender."

Emberstar nodded in her direction. "That's why we need help from the other clans. I have decided to send Whiteear and Waterheart to ThunderClan and WindClan, to help us defeat ShadowClan." The two toms stood.

"You can count on us, Emberstar," Whiteear said. They sprinted out of camp. Emberstar looked to the two eldest apprentices.

"We will hold your warrior ceremony tomorrow," he said. Bramblepaw and Troutpaw looked at each other, purring. "Also, we need to shape up our battle skills."

"Starting tomorrow, we will have hunting patrols and border patrols like usual, but all cats not directly involved will go to intense training." The RiverClan leader lashed his tail. "This will be the last battle where RiverClan is defeated."

Chapter Fourteen

"I wonder how many lives Emberstar has left," Silverpaw meowed to her sister, as they padded to the Horseplace with the rest of their training group.

Dawnpaw looked at her sister, mouth gaping. "Silverpaw!" she exclaimed. "Don't ask questions like that!"

"I'm just asking," her sister said, shrugging. Dawnpaw huffed and quickened her pace to be next to her mentor, Tanglebrook.

The white and black tom looked at his apprentice as she came closer. "Dawnpaw," he growled. "I'm not going to punish you for breaking the warrior code, because you saved Aspencloud's life in the process. But if you ever do anything like that again, I will chase you out of RiverClan myself."

Dawnpaw ducked her head. "Yes, Tanglebrook."

Her mentor, done with rebuking for the day butted her on the shoulder as the Horseplace came into view. Tanglebrook stopped running and turned to face the panting group of cats. Dawnpaw sheathed and unsheathed her claws in the sticky ground, wishing that they could train in the solid ground nearer to ShadowClan territory.

"As a senior warrior," said Tanglebrook, nodding to all of the cats in his group. "I have been instructed to train you younger warriors." He stuck his tail in the air and it waved from side to side. "Everyone, get into pairs of two."

Dawnpaw turned to her sister, but Tanglebrook stuck a paw out to stop her.

"You're going to be my partner," he mewed.

Great! Thought Dawnpaw sarcastically. *It will be just like our private training sessions, when he demonstrates how to do a move on me, and I end up all bruised.*

When all of the other cats had grabbed partners, Tanglebrook stood across from Dawnpaw.

"This move that I'm going to show you," he explained,"is used when you are surrounded by many cats or after you jump over your enemy." He turned to his audience. "How many of you were jumped on by a ShadowClan cat yesterday after jumping over their heads?"

Foxleap, Rainleaf, and Troutpaw raised their tails, and Tanglebrook nodded. "Why were you jumped on?"

Rainleaf took a pace forward. "I was jumped on because in the time it took to turn, they were already in the air."

"Correct," the black and white cat said," This move however, will let you attack your enemy without even turning around. What I am going to do," he turned to Dawnpaw. "Is jump over your head. What would be your first reaction?"

"To turn and pounce on your back," she said.

"Do that," Tanglebrook said. He looked at the other RiverClan cats. "Watch closely," and without warning jumped in a soaring leap over his white and orange apprentice.

Startled, Dawnpaw spun on her hind legs and bent them slightly to spring. Before he even turned around, and before Dawnpaw could leap onto his back, both of Tanglebrook's hind paws smashed into her muzzle. She fell backwards, where her mentor than pinned down, with his teeth to her throat.

Once Tanglebrook let her up, Dawnpaw shook her head, still feel the pressure from where his explosive back kick had hit. *Luckily his claws were sheathed,* she thought. *Or my face would be even more of a mess than it is now!*

Tanglebrook walked closer the other cats. "One of you pounce, and the other do the back kick. Claws sheathed!" he called, as the partners began jumping on each other.

Dawnpaw rubbed her muzzle softly, wincing at the small pin picks of pain. She looked at her Clanmates, who were training as if their lives depended on it. *Which*, she realized, *it did.*

ShadowClan better watch out for us, she thought. *We'll give them a real surprise in the next battle.*

Dawnpaw and the rest of her patrol dashed into camp a little after sun high, panting from the long run from Horseplace to camp. The rest of the clan was already in the clearing, and relaxed as their clanmates returned. Dawnpaw stumbled as Troutpaw pushed past her. He trotted up to Bramblepaw, who stood with a shining pelt next to Emberstar.

Silverpaw and Dawnpaw sat in the back of the group, giving each other glances that revealed the jealousy they felt.

"Bramblepaw—" Emberstar said, but was interrupted by yowls from outside of the camp.

"For the sake of StarClan!" Bramblepaw hissed. "What is with all of these delays?"

Whiteear and Waterpelt dashed through the camp entrance, their pelts glistening from where they had swam across the rivers.

"Emberstar!" Whiteeaar said, dashing to the red tom. "WindClan won't help us."

Waterpelt skidded up beside his clanmate. "And neither will ThunderClan!"

The tip of Emberstar's tail twitched, and Dawnpaw could see that he was struggling to make the fur on his shoulders lie flat.

"Why not?" he growled.

"They both said that they had to take care of their own clans, now

that leaf-bare is approaching," Whiteear hissed.

Silverpaw looked around the camp. "Leaf-bare?" she spat, drawing the eyes of the clan to her. "Are they mouse-brained? It's not even leaf-fall yet!"

"But they decided," Waterpelt growled. He looked at Emberstar. "We're all alone in this battle now."

Chapter Fifteen

There was silence in the camp until Aspencloud stood on her paws and mewed," we are not alone, Waterpelt. We will never be alone, for StarClan will always be watching over us and guide our paws to the right path."

"If StarClan is so powerful, why don't they do something about this war?" Silverpaw hissed into Dawnpaw's ear. A jolt of anger went through Silverpaw. Why were her Clanmates forced to suffer from ShadowClan? There was a rule in the warrior code that in a time of trouble, all clans must help each other. "There always must be four Clans!" she murmured aloud.

Emberstar twitched his tail and nodded to dismiss Waterpelt and Whiteear.

"Thank you for your report," he said. The two toms nodded, then sat down in the crowd. Silverpaw could see that their claws were sheathed and unsheathing on the ground, but if Emberstar noticed it he gave no sign.

"Even though we are in a war," he began," life still goes on. That includes the making of new warriors." he turned to the two toms. "Bramblepaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and protect this clan, even on the cost of your life?"

"I do," said Bramblepaw, his voice wavering.

"Then from this moment on you will be known as Bramblefang. StarClan honors your determination and independence, and we welcome you as a full warrior of RiverClan."

The brown tom bowed his head, and Emberstar rested his muzzle on the newly named Bramblefang's head.

Emberstar turned to Troutpaw. "Troutpaw," he mewed, "Do you

promise to uphold the warrior code, and protect this clan, even on the cost of your life?"

"I do." Troutpaw's answer was stronger than his brother's, and Silverpaw realized that the warrior code meant everything to her former denmate.

"Then from this moment on you will be known as Troutsplash. StarClan honors your intense loyalty, and we welcome you as a full warrior of RiverClan." Emberstar rested his muzzle on Troutsplash's head, and as he stepped back a call came up from the assembled cats.

"Bramblefang, Troutsplash, Bramblefang, Troutsplash!" Silverpaw looked up into the sky, where the Silverpelt was shining. She wondered if her warrior ancestors were truly looking down at her, and if they knew anything about the prophecy.

Poppythorn stood up and waved her tail for silence. "Now that Bramblefang is finally a warrior—" some cats purred,"I can make an announcement. I'm going to have kits," she meowed triumphantly.

Silverpaw purred happily and looked at Foxleap, who was sitting up straight with the stars gleaming in his eyes. *He's the father*, she thought.

"See," Aspencloud said, once all of the well-wishing and purring died down. "Life still goes on, even though we are in the midst of a war. This shows that RiverClan is not beaten." The medicine cat's voice deepened into a growl. "And we never will be."

Chapter Sixteen

"Stay with your own clan," Emberstar hissed to his patrol. "No mingling tonight. There is too much trouble for that to be going on." The red tom marched through the ThunderClan and WindClan cats, to the Great Oak, where he climbed to the highest branches to sit glowering at the other two leaders.

"Runningstar and Swiftstar look terrified," purred Silverpaw. "It's like they think that Emberstar's going to jump on them in any moment."

Dawnpaw shrugged. "It's a gathering. StarClan's laws say that you can't show hostility during a Gathering. Of course Emberstar wouldn't attack other leaders."

He might be tempted to when Thistlestar arrives, Dawnpaw thought to herself. Two moons had passed since the ShadowClan leader had officially declared war, and although nothing had happened in the last Gathering, Dawnpaw was sure that something would happen in this one. Silverpaw stood up on her hind legs, looking like a StarClan warrior with stars shining on her fur.

"ShadowClan's here," she growled. Warriors all around the RiverClan cats began to mutter and whisper things about the war. Silverpaw sat back down, and pressed against her sister as the two of them watched the ShadowClan warriors race into the clearing, Thistlestar and Lighteye leading them.

Thistlestar, in all of his spiky grey glory sat at the highest branches of the Great Oak, so he could look down on all of the other leaders. Lighteye took her place with the other deputies by the roots of the Oak, and the other members of ShadowClan made sure that they sat next to RiverClan.

"They're trying to provoke us," whispered Dawnpaw to her sister. Rubypaw and Grasspaw, the two ShadowClan apprentices were sitting right next to them, shooting dark glances. Silverpaw opened

a mouth to hiss at them, but thought better of it.

A long yowl came from Thistlestar. Apparently he had decided he would start the meeting, for the other two leaders looked furious. Emberstar twitched his reddish-brown tail as if he couldn't care less.

"ShadowClan has had a prosperous green-leaf," Thistlestar said, his eyes gleaming. "Our nursery is full of kits, our apprentices and warriors are strong, and there has been no serious injuries in the cowardly battle against RiverClan."

Dawnpaw hissed and leapt to her paws. "Cowardly? How are we cowards, you piece of fox-dung?"

Silverpaw stood beside her sister. "Your deputy tried to kill our medicine cat! And we're the cowards?"

The clearing erupted into chaos, and Dawnpaw caught sight of Lighteye waggling her haunches like she was going to attack. Softwing cuffed both of her kits around their ears.

"Dawnpaw! Silverpaw! You don't challenge another Clan's leader like that!" Her blue eyes were brimming with pride as she scolded, and the other RiverClan cats purred at the two apprentices that had so much bravery.

"Silence!" Yowled Swiftstar. Thistlestar dipped his head, and turned to Emberstar.

"Is the leader of RiverClan so cowardly that apprentices need to fight his battles?" Thistlestar sneered. Emberstar let out a growl and looked up at the bristling ShadowClan leader.

"What Silverpaw says is true, Thistlestar. Lighteye did attack our medicine cat. And if that is not cowardly, what is?" He lashed his tail as the Clan cats yowled their approval of his statement. The ShadowClan warriors didn't move a muscle, just sat with their eyes gleaming in the darkness. Thistlestar looked at the Clan cats, and began climbing down the trunk of the Great Oak. Clouds edged closer to the moon, and Dawnpaw took in a breath.

"What is he doing?" She hissed to Silverpaw.

"He's going to attack Emberstar!" Silverpaw whispered frantically.

"Don't be a mouse-brain—" With a yowl of defiance, Thistlestar hurled himself at Emberstar. The two toms tumbled off of the branch, and together bounced to the way to the ground.

"StarClan is angry!" Yowled Aspencloud. She dashed up to the two battling toms and tried to talk sense to them. "You cannot fight in a Gathering!"

"To the Dark Forest with this," Dawnpaw heard Troutsplash say. The newly named warrior prepared to spring on the two leaders, but Silverpaw cuffed him around the ears.

"Just because ShadowClan is breaking the truce doesn't mean we will," hissed Silverpaw.

Troutsplash stared at her, then leapt upon Thistlestar.

"Don't!" yowled Dawnpaw, but her voice was lost in the fray of others. "Troutsplash, you mouse-brain!"

Inspired by the brown tom, warriors from both RiverClan and ShadowClan joined the fight. The other clans stared at the wrestling cats, delight alighting in their eyes from the new source of excitement. The medicine cats stood at the edge, shocked at the turn that the Gathering had taken.

Dawnpaw huddled on the ground, terrified as the fight moved closer to the small knot of RiverClan warriors. Silverpaw however, looked ready to jump in at any moment. A horrible yowl sounded, and through the paws of other warriors Dawnpaw could see Bramblefang bleeding heavily from his neck. He staggered to the other RiverClan cats, seeking shelter, when a dark-pelted cat pulled him back into the fray. Blood was glistening on the grass.

How could StarClan let this happen? She thought. Looking up at the moon, she realized that there were clouds blocking it from sight, although the stars stared coldly back at them.

Has StarClan abandoned us? She wondered.

Chapter Seventeen

Silverpaw let out a low hiss as she watched the line of ShadowClan warriors cross the RiverClan border and move closer. Iceleap's tail brushed her apprentice's flank.

"Stay with me," she said. "And try and fight cats that you know you can fight. So, the ShadowClan apprentices." Silverpaw didn't turn her head, but only muttered a small mew of agreement.

I wish Dawnpaw was here, she thought. The battle lines had been re-made by Emberstar, and now the younger warriors and apprentices were fighting alongside the senior warriors. The reddish brown tom was in the camp, still recovering from his wounds from the Gathering and the one in the previous battle.

Minnowtail lifted her tail, showing the sign to move forward, towards the approaching ShadowClan warriors. Silverpaw dropped into a battle crouch and stepped purposely across the grass, it's dewy blades brushing her nose. She kept her eyes focused on Minnowtail's orange tail, ready to react to any other orders.

Glancing back at her warriors, the deputy began to open her mouth when Thistlestar leapt on top of her, yowling a battle cry. ShadowClan warriors came thundering down upon the RiverClan warriors. Silverpaw bunched her muscles, found a target, and leapt upon the ShadowClan apprentice Rubypaw.

Hissing furiously, Silverpaw unsheathed her claws and raked the Rubypaw's shoulder. Beads of crimson blood appeared, then started flowing down her orange and white fur.

"You piece of fox-dung," the other apprentice hissed, and tried to jump on Silverpaw. Silverpaw pushed her out in midair, almost crashing into Iceleap as she wrestled underneath a black tom.

"Are all ShadowClan cats that slow?" Silverpaw taunted. Rubypaw

swiped again, her anger making the blow clumsy and off-target. Silverpaw forced down a groan of frustration, and cuffed the ShadowClan cat over the ears. As Rubypaw grunted in pain, Silverpaw took the chance to land several more blows, ones that drew blood, onto her haunches and back.

"Get off my sister, you piece of crow-food!" screeched Grasspaw. The ShadowClan cat leapt onto Silverpaw's back, ripping out pawfulls of her back and neck fur.

"Don't expect anything less!" growled Rubypaw. "RiverClan has never fought fair!" Silverpaw screeched as claws dug deeper into her pelt, and she felt as if her bones were on fire. Great StarClan! She thought desperately, buckling underneath the weight of both Grasspaw and Rubypaw.

Rubypaw leapt off of Silverpaw's back and caught hold of her ear. Yowling, Silverpaw shook her head, but the orange and white apprentice held on tighter, until she felt part of it tear away. Blood dripped into her eyes, and her pelt was fiery with pain.

"Help—" Silverpaw tried to yowl, but was cut off by another yowl as Grasspaw scratched her back.

Soon, another weight landed on Silverpaw's back, and she crumpled to the ground, as the new cat was heavier than both Grasspaw and Rubypaw combined.

"So you think it's fair when it's two to one?" Dawnpaw hissed. She screeched and threw herself at Grasspaw, knocking her into the grass. The two apprentices wrestled, trying to claw each others eyes.

Silverpaw stood, dizzy. She shook her head, wincing at the pain in her ear, then knocked Rubypaw's legs from underneath her. As the ShadowClan apprentice fell, she used the moment to bring both forepaws down on her head in a crushing blow.

"You cowardly piece of fox-dung!" Silverpaw hissed. She unsheathed her claws and sliced Rubypaw's muzzle, blood spraying on the ground and on her own pelt. Rubypaw lashed out both paws and

gripped Silverpaw by her shoulders. For a moment the two she-cats tried to push each other down, and Silverpaw twisted violently to the side.

Rubypaw crumpled onto the ground, and Silverpaw lashed out quickly. She placed both of her unsheathed paws on the ShadowClan cat's shoulder, and pummeled the soft white fur of her belly with both hind legs.

Coughing, Rubypaw wheezed," Stop! I-I surrender." Silverpaw stepped back from the apprentice.

"Run," she hissed.

A light sparked in Rubypaw's eyes as she stood and shook herself. "No. It's your turn." Rubypaw thrust herself at Silverpaw, throwing swipe after swipe. Her blows were clumsy and inaccurate, but still were strong. The ShadowClan cat joined Grasspaw, and together they forced Silverpaw and Dawnpaw back from the battle lines, and deeper into RiverClan territory.

They're fighting like rogues! Silverpaw thought viciously. She clawed back, but the ShadowClan apprentices had gained the upper hand long ago.

"Silverpaw," groaned Dawnpaw. Silverpaw looked at her sister. Crimson spots of red showed on her flank. "I don't think I can go on." Silverpaw darted backwards, turning her back to the other apprentices. Dawnpaw hurried alongside her.

"Where are we going?" Silverpaw hissed. "We can't lead them to camp!"

"Stand and fight, you RiverClan cowards!" yowled Grasspaw. The ShadowClan apprentices were fast, and were gaining on Dawnpaw and Silverpaw every second.

"The water" Dawnpaw panted. "We can win there."

Silverpaw and Dawnpaw stood belly-deep in the rushing river. Grasspaw and Rubypaw stood on the bank, nervously eyeing the fast flowing rapids.

"Scared?" hissed Silverpaw. She leaned forward, whiskers twitching. "It's just water..." Rubypaw and Grasspaw growled deep in their throats. Silverpaw purred and turned towards Dawnpaw. Her paw slipped on the rocks beneath the surface, and Silverpaw's purr stopped as she fell into the water, paws flailing, and shuddered. Her head was ringing, and although she tried to get up to the surface, her paws wouldn't move.

And she fell into the cold embrace of darkness.

Chapter Eighteen

Dawnpaw looked back again to make sure that the cowardly ShadowClan apprentices weren't following them. Her teeth had stopped hurting long ago, and now they were numb, weighted down by Silverpaw's weight. Dawnpaw was dragging her sister back to camp, hoping that the gash on her forehead would heal quickly so she and her sister could go back to battle.

Once Dawnpaw passed the wall of reeds, she barged into camp, dropping Silverpaw accidentally. The silver cat's head thumped against the dirt, which made her bleeding head wound caked in dust.

"Whoops," Dawnpaw murmured. She pricked her ears and called to the empty camp," Aspencloud? Emberstar?"

The reddish brown tom emerged from his den of brambles, ears flat and fur bristling.

"Get out of our camp, you piece of frog dirt," he snarled, then recognized the two apprentices. "Dawnpaw? What are you doing here?"

"Get Aspencloud," she meowed. "Silverpaw's hurt!"

But the orange and white medicine cat was already nosing her way out of her den, a bundle of leaves with a sharp scent in her mouth.

"Move, Dawnpaw," she snapped, her mew muffled by herbs. She crunched by the injured apprentice and rolled Silverpaw onto her back. The wound had finally stopped bleeding, and was caked with dust. Dim red blood showed through the debris.

Aspencloud dropped the herbs onto the ground, and began licking the grit out of Silverpaw's wound. Dawnpaw bounced from paw to paw, anxious to see her sister's green eyes open again. Emberstar

tilted his head to look at the orange and white apprentice curiously.

"What's happening in the battle?" he said nonchalantly, but Dawnpaw could hear the yearning in his mew.

Dawnpaw sighed. "The ShadowClan cats are a lot stronger than us, it seems. They've pushed our battle line back considerably, and Silverpaw and I were chased by the ShadowClan apprentices all the way to the far river."

Emberstar's ears pricked. "They've reached that far?"

"Only two apprentices," Dawnpaw said," and they were too afraid of the water to follow Silverpaw and I past it."

Emberstar's tail lashed, and he murmured," I should be out there, risking my life along with my clanmates."

"Well, you can't," Aspencloud snapped. Dawnpaw looked over and saw that Silverpaw was restlessly fidgeting in her sleep, and her wound was covered with a yellowish paste and thick swaths of cobwebs. The medicine cat crossed over to her leader and leaned towards him.

"You cannot risk your life like this anymore," she hissed bad-temperly. "You only have one life left, and a dead leader would do no good in the middle of the battle."

Dawnpaw gaped. *This is why he can't fight in the battle!*

Emberstar snorted. Aspencloud, feeling as if she had won the argument turned tail on him and went back to her patient.

"You must keep fighting," Emberstar meowed. "Go now, Dawnpaw, and may the power of StarClan be in your paws."

Dawnpaw looked over to her shoulder. "Can't I stay until Silverpaw wakes up?"

"No!" Hissed Aspencloud. "You will see her after the battle is over." As Dawnpaw opened her mouth again, she glared at the apprentice. "You will come back, Dawnpaw. StarClan knows that you have a

destiny to fulfill, and they will not let you die in something as small as a battle."

"Go now," Emberstar meowed. He padded forward. "You are a warrior Dawnpaw, go and prove it now."

Dawnpaw turned tail and ran out of camp, the older cat's words ringing in her ears.

"You are a warrior."

I am, she thought. *And a warrior protects her Clanmates.* Dawnpaw snarled, and ran faster as trees and bushes and rivers blurred her vision. *Watch out, ShadowClan.*

Tanglebrook steadied his apprentice, and the two of them watched the sun, dipping below the hills of WindClan. The battle cries still rang in the air, and Dawnpaw flattened her ears against them. Her white patches were splattered with blood, and although she had not suffered any serious injuries her pelt still stung like fury.

"Will we keep fighting until dawn?" she asked.

Her mentor glanced over. "As long as needed," he growled, and looked up as a rumble of paws sounded. They were behind a tree that looked down on the marshy land near the ShadowClan border. They could see small patches of black on the grass, showing where their Clanmates battled.

"ShadowClan patrol," Tanglebrook whispered. "Three warriors." He looked at his apprentice. "Are you ready?"

Dawnpaw flexed her claws and bunched her muscles, ready to spring on the next warrior that ascended the slope.

"Ready," she hissed.

May StarClan be with me.

Chapter Nineteen

Silverpaw gulped down the bitter herbs and clawed the sides of her nest. Even though her head pounded horribly, she itched to be out fighting.

"Can I go to the battle?" she asked again. Aspencloud looked up from Curlfeather, who had been dragged to the camp by Iceleap. The brown she-cat had been sliced in the belly, and had to be forced into camp by her clanmate. She had wanted to keep fighting, even if it killed her.

Me too! I want to fight for my clan, Silverpaw thought.

"You can go into the clearing," the orange medicine cat meowed, flicking her tail. "But no farther."

"Great StarClan's kits, I feel like a kit," Silverpaw murmured. She padded to the empty clearing, her paws unsteady. Her head spun from where it had been knocked against the rocks in the river.

Silverpaw tasted the air, hoping to scent her sister, coming home after winning the battle. But there were no scents that penetrated the night. She could hear the battle, though. When Iceleap dropped Curlfeather off, she had reported that the RiverClan warriors were scattered, and had been pushed back to the fatherest river. Now it was chaos, with small patrols of RiverClan attacking clumps of ShadowClan warriors.

A screech ripped the air, tearing Silverpaw's concentration in two. Emberstar sprang out of his den, eyes fierce like a younger cat. When he saw no enemies, he shook his head and glanced back to the medicine den.

"Aspencloud," he called. The she-cat came out of her den, scraps of bloody moss sticking to her pelt. "I have to go and fight."

Aspencloud opened her mouth, but Emberstar silenced her with a flick of his ears. "All of my warriors are out there, fighting for their lives. As their leader, I should be fighting tooth and claw with them."

The medicine cat focused on something behind Emberstar, something that Silverpaw couldn't see.

"Very well," she murmured. "If StarClan wills it."

Emberstar dipped his head to both she-cats, and raced out of the camp. Silverpaw watched him, shivering as another loud yowl rang in the air. There were cats dying out there, and she wondered if any — RiverClan or ShadowClan— would die in battle.

Will I never see Dawnpaw again? She thought, paws prickling with fear. She wanted to race out behind Emberstar and fight alongside her sister, protected Dawnpaw from ShadowClan claws. *I can protect her, I'm a better fighter than she.*

Aspencloud sat beside the silver apprentice. Silverpaw jumped slightly, then stared into the medicine cat's dreamy blue eyes.

"How's Curlfeather?" Silverpaw asked.

"She'll survive," meowed Aspencloud. Her tone was dark as she continued. "I know that you want to fight, Silverpaw, but in battle you are reckless. You charge in and that is why you get hurt. You have to be careful. The prophecy does not allow mistakes."

The prophecy. Silverpaw had not thought of it in many days. She stared at the Silverpelt, twinkling far above them. "What is the prophecy?" she asked. "I need to know."

Aspencloud stood. "I told you before. You do not need to know until it is time. When it is, I will tell you. But not before."

As the orange medicine cat padded back to check on Curlfeather, Silverpaw glared at the stars, her warrior ancestors.

"Is the prophecy about the war against ShadowClan?" she meowed to the empty air. "Is RiverClan in trouble?" The silver stars gave no

sign that they had heard her. "Answer me!" Silverpaw hissed. What was the use of StarClan and their cryptic prophecies if they couldn't even answer them fully? "StarClan, tell me what to do!"

They were still glittering coldly above her.

"Please?" Now Silverpaw's mew was a whimper. She flattened her ears against more screeches that rung in the air. "I don't know what to do. I'm scared."

"Don't be scared," whispered a voice. Silverpaw looked around, trying to locate the source.

"Aspencloud is right. StarClan cannot give you the prophecy. You and Dawnpaw are not ready."

"But how do I prepare for what's coming?" Silverpaw meowed.

The whisper faltered, and for a moment she thought that it was going away. Then it said one word.

"Herbs. Learn your herbs."

"Why?" Whispered Silverpaw. She stood on her paws, tipping her muzzle to the stars. "Why do I have to learn herbs?"

There was no answer.

"Cobwebs for bleeding, marigold for infection, and poppy seeds for pain," recited Silverpaw, jabbing her paw in each of the pile. "And... that's all I remember."

"Very good," Aspencloud said. She leaned closer to the warrior apprentice. "I'm not going to ask why you are learning about herbs. But don't mention it to any other cat, okay? I'm not supposed to share my remedies with anyone but my apprentice."

Silverpaw nodded, and sank onto her haunches. She lifted a paw to softly rub at the healing wound on her forehead.

"Aspencloud, does StarClan know the future?"

The medicine cat looked up in the juniper bush's branches. "They can see glimpses, that's all."

"Something bad is coming, right?" Silverpaw looked at Aspencloud's face, waiting for a reaction.

Aspencloud was taken aback. She hesitated, then looked into the green eyes of the apprentice.

"Something looms in the shadows— and StarClan doesn't even know how to fight it."

Chapter Twenty

Dawnpaw shook her head, grateful for a moment of rest. She and Tanglebrook were right next to the ShadowClan border, where they had chased a patrol of warriors back to their own territory. She turned to her mentor, hissing slightly as her leg buckled beneath her. A bite wound glistened in the darkness of the night, and her white paws were covered in blood. Tanglebrook glanced at his apprentice and stood next to her.

"Can you keep fighting?" he asked, gesturing to her hind leg.

Dawnpaw gritted her teeth and nodded. "I'll fight to the death if I have to," she muttered. "One wound won't stop me."

Tanglebrook nodded approvingly. "I'm proud to have you as my apprentice," he meowed. "It's that kind of attitude that gets warriors through the hardest and most grueling battles." Dawnpaw stood straighter at his praise. After four moons with him as a mentor, she knew that he did not give compliments out all the time. Suddenly, paws pounded behind Tanglebrook, and Dawnpaw could see the grey pelt of Waterheart running towards them.

"What is it?" Tanglebrook asked.

Waterheart panted between words, and Dawnpaw saw that her left eye was closed, and swelling to the size of a frog. "Near the far river... Fighting with most of warriors... Emberstar..." The she-cat stopped speaking, and her eyes rolled up to show the whites. Tanglebrook dashed forward, and put a paw to her chest. Relief showing on his face, he turned to his apprentice.

"Go," he growled. "I'll take care of Waterheart. You need to help Emberstar." Dawnpaw stumbled slightly, then picked up pace as she ran to the far river.

Don't let me be too late, she thought desperately. Emberstar couldn't lose another life, or he might be too weak to gather the clan after

the battle. And the far river was so close to camp...The orange and white apprentice glanced at the stars, hoping to spot a glimmer of hope from her warrior ancestors.

"Don't let anyone die tonight," she whispered, then plunged into a grove of trees, following a paw-worn path, leading to the far river. She could hear the battle before she saw it. Although the river was loud, louder than usual, Minnowtail's yowl rose above all of the screeches and curses of battling cats.

"How dare you?" she yowled. Dawnpaw burst out onto the bank, water lapping her paws. The orange tabby was standing over Emberstar's still body, facing the ShadowClan deputy Lighteye.

All around her, RiverClan cats and ShadowClan cats grappled with each other. Blood ran down cats' pelt, and the river was turning pink, going on a light red. Dawnpaw leapt into the river, feeling the currents tug at her body. But her paws were as strong as any other RiverClan cat's, and her tail guided her through the water.

"He was a weak leader," Lighteye hissed. Dawnpaw could see, that the white she-cat's fur was bristling, and her haunches were bunched. "He deserved to die."

"He didn't," Minnowtail choked, and ran her paw over the leader's still fur. "He was a wonderful leader." Dawnpaw remembered that Minnowtail had been Emberstar's mate. *Was?* Dawnpaw thought, and stumbled on the shore. *Emberstar's— dead?* She froze in shock.

"I'll do the same to you," purred Lighteye. She took a threatening step to the grieving deputy. "If you don't surrender." Minnowtail looked up from her dead mate, poorly covered fury evident on her eyes.

"What do you want from us?" she whispered, calming down. Her tail gestured to the battling cats. "Is all of this spilled blood, all this death going to satisfy you?" Lighteye flattened her torn ears.

"Never," she snarled cruelly. Her eyes were that of a blood-lusting cat. Dawnpaw shivered. "Now, are you going to surrender, or are you going to watch more of your precious clanmates die?" Quick as

lightning, Lighteye grabbed Dawnpaw and threw her down on the pebbles. Claws gripped her shoulders, and long fangs leaned against her throat.

Minnowtail's eyes filled with anger, and she stood next to the helpless apprentice. "Let her go, Lighteye."

"Not unless you surrender," The ShadowClan deputy hissed. Her claws unsheathed, and dug into Dawnpaw's pelt. The apprentice whimpered slighty with both fear and pain.

"Fine," Minnowtail murmured. She raised her voice to a yowl. "RiverClan, retreat!" Lighteye released Dawnpaw and stood, staring at Minnowtail.

"Run," she hissed. Dawnpaw turned tail, and followed her clanmates back to camp. The moon shone through the trees, making the defeated RiverClan cat's wounds sparkle in the eerie light.

We lost, Dawnpaw thought despairingly. *We lost the battle. We lost Emberstar.*

The elders had never been in a battle, as big as this, where they had lost. Dawnpaw doubted that any Clan remembered the last battle where that had happened.

What's going to happen to RiverClan now?

Chapter Twenty-One

'Silverpaw pricked her ears as she heard her Clanmates running back into camp. Without saying anything to Aspencloud, the silver apprentice leapt out of the medicine cat's den and crossed the clearing. She stopped, aghast at the horrible injuries that covered the cats.

"Dawnpaw?" she asked, threading through Tanglebrook and Waterheart. The two cats were covered in blood, and Waterheart was unsteady on her paws, leaning on Tanglebrook so she could stand. "Dawnpaw?" She couldn't see the large orange and white apprentice anywhere.

Oh, please StarClan, she thought, *don't let Dawnpaw be dead! When* she saw her sister stumble into the camp, Minnowtail close behind her. Silverpaw dashed up and wove her tail around Dawnpaw's.

"You're okay!" she purred. Dawnpaw looked at Silverpaw.

"Emberstar's dead," she meowed hoarsely. "We lost the battle." Silverpaw stopped purring and stared at her sister. Please tell me you're joking, she hoped, but Dawnpaw and Minnowtail looked so depressed that it chased all thoughts of hope out of her mind.

"What is ShadowClan going to do because they won the battle?" Dawnpaw shrugged, and Silverpaw leaned closer to her sister. "Where is Emberstar?"

"We had to leave his body," whispered Minnowtail. The new RiverClan leader bent her head and padded softly to the middle of the clearing, where her mate always stood to address the clan. The two sisters watched Minnowtail speak.

"We have lost the battle," she meowed," and Emberstar is dead." She glanced up. "I...I say these words before the body of Emberstar, so that his spirit may hear and approve of my choice." She paused and gazed at her battle-weary clanmates. "Tangle—"

A low hiss came from behind Dawnpaw and Silverpaw, breaking off Minnowtail's next words. A dark brown tabby she-cat with glowing yellow eyes stood, long-legged in the entrance. Lighteye and Thistlestar were on each side of her.

"You are not the leader of RiverClan," the tabby meowed playfully. Her eyes flashed. "I am."

Silverpaw felt her sister shrink away, and she stood straighter. "Minnowtail is the leader of RiverClan. She was the deputy, and the deputy always succeeds the leader." And you're not a Clan cat, she added silently.

"Times are changing," snarled Thistlestar. "My daughter will be the new leader of RiverClan." He glanced at Minnowtail. "Or do we need to kill all of your clanmates first?" Dark, lithe shapes came from behind each and every den, stinking of ShadowClan. The warriors boxed the RiverClan cats into the center of the clearing. Hissing and growling, Dawnpaw and Silverpaw were forced up against a wall of reeds by Grasspaw and Rubypaw.

"Miss us?" Rubypaw sneered. Thistlestar padded to Minnowtail, his daughter at his side.

"Ivy is now the new leader of this clan," he meowed. "There will be no deputy, no warrior code. Only Ivy." He stared at all of the astonished RiverClan cats. He grinned maliciously. "She will make sure of that."

Silverpaw leaned back against the reeds and stared up at the Silverpelt, which had grown dimmer since the last time she looked at them. Why are you doing this? She asked her warrior ancestors. Why are we suffering like this? A paw jabbed her back, and Silverpaw whipped her head around. Behind the reeds, her mother's face looked at hers.

"Silverpaw," she hissed softly, keeping one eye on the ShadowClan apprentices. "You and Dawnpaw need to run. Go through the reeds, and I'll cover you." Silverpaw gaped.

"Softwing..." she said, then looked at the grave expression in her

mother's eyes. "You're really doing this?"

Her mother nodded. "Hurry now, Silverpaw. Head for beyond the border." Her eyes softened. "Your father is watching over you. Keep Silverpelt in sight." Softwing leaned over and whispered the same thing to Dawnpaw. The two sisters looked at each other, and Dawnpaw licked between Silverpaw's ears.

"Ready?" she whispered.

Silverpaw nodded. "As ready as I'lll ever be." The two apprentices whipped around and disappeared through the reeds. They could hear the camp in an uproar behind them, and the sound urged the two of them to push themselves even more.

"Where are we going?" Dawnpaw panted.

"Away," Silverpaw responded. "Anywhere but RiverClan or ShadowClan territory."

"We're abandoning RiverClan?" Dawnpaw said. She looked at her sister. "Isn't this breaking the warrior code?"

"No," Silverpaw said. Her paws thrummed as they left the reed bed and started gaining speed across the grass. "If we can get enough cats from RiverClan to join us outside of the territory, we can attack and take our Clan back." Silverpaw growled deep in her throat and turned to her sister.

"We're not breaking the warrior code— we're saving our clan."

Book 2 of the Whispers of the Shadows Series: Breaking Winds

[image]

Please visit @lynxkitten65's account for the second book, Breaking Winds. Thank you for reading!

A Note From the Authors

This series was planned out originally three years ago, but was left on the shelf collecting dust until now. Somehow, the idea came back to life and lit a flame to write it. Lynxkitten65 and I (Brooke_Writer) launched a brand new series, Whispers of the Shadows. There were a lot of things that changed in the second version, and for everyone who have been following the series, it may be amusing to read about everything that changed. So, here it is, from both authors!

1) Dawnpaw and Silverpaw were originally supposed to have another sister, Mistypaw. But later, she developed more into a side character who didn't do that much.

2) There was supposed to be a cat who had about 10 kits per litter, and have 22-30 kits in about ten moons.

3) Each clan originally had about 18 cats in it. As you can see, that sure expanded!

4) Each chapter was going to be written by each author, but it transformed into a trade-off between both lynxkitten65 and Brooke_Writer. For future readers, lynxkitten65 will be writing the 2nd, 3rd, and half of the 6th book. Brooke_Writer will be writing book 1, 4, 5, and some of the 6th one with lynxkitten65.

5) In Crookedstar's Promise, there is a cat named Softwing and she has a kit named Dawnkit. We didn't mean to have that happen, but it is amazing that it's so similar to what we have. Throughout all of the warriors books, we can find names that are exactly the same as the ones in our books. Oops..